

Does

God

Have Favourites?



*And Other
Heart-to-Heart Talks*

J. P. Vaswani



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J.P. VASWANI



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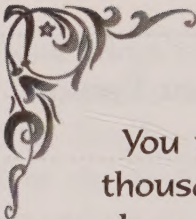
Preface

This book brings together, a few of Revered Dada J.P. Vaswani's inspiring discourses, originally delivered in Sindhi or Hindi. Some of them were delivered at the Sadhu Vaswani Mission, a few of them were *ruh-rihans* (heart-to-heart talks) given to smaller audiences, while others are public talks in Hindi. These beautiful talks are now published in English for the benefit of many. We wish to share the grace and blessings enjoyed from listening to these beautiful and soul-stirring discourses with one and all.

Dada Shyam!

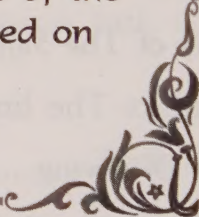
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You may develop a
thousand virtues and
be reckoned as the
best in the land.

But the lotus of your
heart will not blossom
until the Grace of the
Guru is poured on
you!



The Guru Can Do No Wrong

(1)

In the *Dark of the Dawn* is a small beautiful book written by our Master, Sadhu Vaswani. In this book he reveals one of the secrets of spiritual life. The secret is to have absolute and unquestioning faith in the Guru. Do not ever judge the Guru's actions, do not ever criticise him, the Master urges. If your mind is incapable of such faith and you are threatened by doubts and misgivings, then remind yourself that your Guru at least deserves the respect you would give to a broom. A broom by itself may not be clean, but it sweeps the house clean. Similarly, the Guru, irrespective of his stature, helps to clean our mind. This may sound harsh to some of you; but there are people who constantly ask questions and raise doubts about the Guru's intentions, especially if the Guru thinks differently from them. Therefore, let me say to you, bow down to your Guru in all humility and seek his blessings. This is one of the secrets of the spiritual life, the life of the spirit.



Who is a Guru? The Guru is a being of Light. The Guru is one who dwells in the Light and the Light dwells in him. We are ignorant beings, and more often than not, we are unable to judge people. We do not have the ability to distinguish between the true and the false. This is one of the reasons why we fall from grace and suffer spiritually. When disheartened by the vicissitudes of life, we yearn for the balancing force, we seek a person who would show us a way out. The one who leads us out of darkness into light is the Guru. The task of the Guru is to purify us and to kindle the flame within our soul. At this stage in life we are full of filth. It is the accumulated filth of our earlier births. We have lived through many births, but we are ignorant of our earlier lives.

The pertinent question that arises is, how we can clean our heart of this accumulated filth? Unless we purify our heart of accumulated *karmic* filth, we cannot make progress on the spiritual path.

But we must remember, the one person who can help us in this task of inner purification is the Guru. The Guru has that magic broom with which he can sweep away the *karmic* filth. The Guru alone can do this job, for it is beyond the individual's ability. No matter how much effort he puts in, no matter how much he struggles, he cannot reach the depths within. The Guru has this power, the Guru has the ability and the means to do this – but he can help you only if you have absolute faith in him.



What is 'absolute faith' that I am talking about? It is true, unswerving faith in the grace and wisdom of the Guru. True faith remains undeterred by gossip or criticism. *Do not ever criticise the Guru's actions or judge his behaviour.* Obedience to the Guru is the prime requisite for the pilgrim on the path. I repeat: The Guru is above question.

Why should this be so? Why should you accord your Guru such trust and reverence?

The Guru knows what is the best for his disciple. He may not reveal his intentions directly to you; he may deliberately act or speak in such a way as to puzzle you and put you in doubt and uncertainty. The fact is, at that point in your life, a little doubt and a little unsure feeling, might actually be good for your spiritual welfare. But some of us are shaken by this test that the Guru puts us through. On such occasions our faith in the Guru is shaken.

Many great souls have passed through such experiences. When they seek refuge at the Guru's feet and go to live with him, they are often assailed by doubts, judging their Guru by surface appearances. The weaker ones lose faith and drop out of the spiritual journey. But the determined aspirants admonish themselves for their unworthy attitude and renew their faith and trust in the Guru. Beware, they warn themselves, you have taken refuge in the Guru, and it is not for you to judge him. When their faith



and commitment are tried and tested, the Guru blesses them and showers his grace on them. And the time comes when the disciple becomes one with the Guru.

Let me tell you, the greatest boon that life can give us is the grace of the Guru; and this grace comes along with the resolute faith which keeps us rooted at the lotus feet of the Master. So have faith in the Guru and he will purify your heart. Purification of the heart is necessary even when the mind is clear and open and the intellect is sharp. Doctors, advocates and scholars who lecture on the Gita and Upanishads may be experts and impressive speakers; but if their hearts are not pure, they are mere preachers, their souls are not evolved – and their discourses cannot help you on the path.

A well established doctor once confided in me that very often, when a pretty female patient came to him for consultation, he would get disturbed and become subject to impure desires. He had a beautiful wife and he was a great doctor. But, unfortunately, he had little control over his mind which gave rise to vicious desires of lust.

It is strange that we may have the knowledge of books, we may have read scriptures but the reading does not give us the wisdom and the strength to control our minds. Hence, a trifling incident or experience arouses undesirable thoughts and emotions within us. This happens because our hearts are impure. It is said, that what is in your heart is mirrored in your life. A true human being is one who is blessed



with a pure heart. A man who has a pure heart knows that in this universe we are all connected, we are all interdependent.

Greater, infinitely greater than brain power is the power of the will. This is what we need to succeed in life. Very often we procrastinate, we keep postponing doing certain things that are essential for our spiritual growth, and this is because of our weak will power. We need will power and will power can be bestowed on us by the Guru. It is in the company of the Guru that we become large hearted. We become devoted; we learn to purify our hearts.

May I tell you, the man who lacks will power and has an impure heart is no better than an animal! He may be rich in the wealth of this world, he may have position and power which impresses the world: but all this counts for nothing on the spiritual path.

We must strive to rise above the animalistic tendencies. We must strive to be good human beings. We must live this life of ours with a strong will power and a large and pure heart.

(3)

Gurudev Sadhu Vaswani always inspired us to remain within the positive aura of the Guru and to serve him in every way we could. Once a devotee asked him, "How does one obtain the Guru's grace to serve Him?"



Gurudev Sadhu Vaswani replied, “If you want to serve the Master then you must dedicate your life to him. He may assign you with a major responsibility, or entrust you with a humble task. Irrespective of the work assigned to you, do your allotted task with the feeling of total surrender. Whatever you do should be an act of dedication, a labour of devotion.”

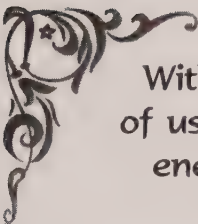
Whatever work you do, do it as an offering to the Master. This will help you to be honest and sincere in your work. You will work without any expectation. You will accept the work as an opportunity for service to the Lord.

A few days ago, some of our *satsangis* were sent out to go and distribute their share of food among the poor people. They came back to tell us that they had a wonderful experience. One of them said, “I gave my food to a visually impaired man and I felt as if I was giving food to Sadhu Vaswani. I felt immense joy within. The experience was uplifting and fulfilling. The blind man was also happy to receive food. His face glowed with happiness.”

Service to other people, especially to the underprivileged can be a truly inspiring and uplifting experience, a source of real joy.

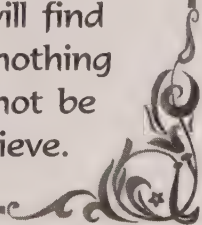
I sum up my talk with the words – purify your thoughts; awaken the willpower within; and seek opportunities to serve the Guru.

Service of the Guru purifies, cleanses and awakens the heart.



Within each one
of us are immense
energies of the
Eternal,
tremendous powers of
the Spirit.

If only we can unlock
a fraction of those
powers, we will find
that there is nothing
that we will not be
able to achieve.



Within You Is The Power

(1)

Sadhu Vaswani founded the *Sakhi Satsang* in 1929, and later, he formed the Brotherhood Association, with the goal of cultivating the soul. Hundreds of brothers and sisters who flocked to join his spiritual gatherings, gradually became regular *satsangis*. To this day, as many of you know, the *satsang* remains the pivot around which all the Mission activities revolve. Everyday, three *satsang* sessions are held at the Mission Campus, and people make it a point not to miss the daily *satsang*. I am told that some of our Sadhu Vaswani Centres overseas, also hold weekly/bi-weekly/daily *satsangs*, which have their share of regular participants.

A friend once expressed his surprise to me, at the fact that people continue to be drawn to the *satsang*, “in this day and age” as he put it. I responded to his remark with the observation that people needed the *satsang* today, more than their parents and grandparents did in bygone times!



This is not just my personal opinion. Many *satsangis* tell me, that *satsang* gives them a sense of stability, a positive frame of mind, a certain sense of mental well being and peace of mind. They say that *satsang* links them with a Higher energy and in that positive, joyful atmosphere they feel happy and rejuvenated. Whether they hear discourses or recite prayers or read from the *bani* of great ones or participate in singing the Name Divine, they feel elevated. At such times, their minds are free from worldly cares and anxieties; and there awakens a desire within them, the desire to follow in the footsteps of the truly great ones. They yearn to imbibe the ideals of saints and sages, and make their life more meaningful, more worthwhile.

They say, too, that *satsang* cleanses and purifies their thoughts, with its sacred environment and holy vibrations; they are able to discard negative emotions like envy, jealousy, avarice, resentment and anger which trouble all of us at times. In fact, it helps them further by awakening in them the higher impulses that human beings aspire to, such as charity, compassion and philanthropy. And when they yield to these noble impulses, they find that they achieve a sense of harmony and joy that surpasses all worldly satisfaction! In short, they assure me, *satsang* generates a sense of peace and tranquillity, which helps them to evolve into a higher state of living and thinking.

Have you heard the beautiful hymn , '*Sukh Sagar mein aayke, mat jao pyasa pyare*'? It is one of Sadhu



Vaswani's immortal compositions. It is a *bhajan* (hymn) that stirs within us an urge for the higher values of life. The song awakens the slumbering spirit; a sudden realisation dawns upon us: "My life is precious. Let me make the most of it. Let me not go back from this ocean of grace without tasting its sweet waters. Let me not go back exhausted. But let me drink the Divine Nectar and be blessed with bliss and peace."

This is the time of spiritual awakening, which puts you on the path of self-growth. Walking on this path, you feel that you are making your life meaningful and worthwhile; you are happy to walk this path. But, you must know, no path is straight and smooth. It has its share of obstacles, steep gradients, unexpected curves and bends. So too with the path of life. A single trauma can shatter you, and make you feel helpless and ruined. Despair and melancholy constantly seem to wait on you. Troubles and anxieties surround you. At such times, you feel abandoned, your faith becomes vulnerable.

Gurudev Sadhu Vaswani often said to us, "You are not a weakling, as some of you imagine yourself to be. In you is a hidden *shakti*, an energy, that is of Eternity."

(2)

The question is: how can we awaken this *shakti*? Consider Mahatma Gandhi. He was an ordinary

man like you and me. But he had awakened the inner *shakti*, and hence he could wage a successful battle, a battle without any weapons, a battle without bloodshed, against the mighty British Empire. What was this inner *shakti* all about? What was it that made Mahatma Gandhi a great hero?

I once read the story of a beggar. He lived under a tree. He sat there through rain and sunshine, day and night, summer and winter. He was homeless and lived in abject poverty. He ate whatever people threw into his begging bowl. One day he fell ill; his body was racked by pain and fever. He had no money to buy medicine or go to a doctor for treatment. He lay under the tree, ill and delirious until death released his soul from his wasted, emaciated body. A life of utter destitution had come to an end. The police accorded him the last dignity of a destitute's funeral. He had left the world, unwept, unhonoured, unlamented.

A few days passed. The plot of land which he had made his home was acquired by a construction company in order to build a commercial complex. Heavy equipment was brought to dig the ground and lay the foundation for a huge building. When they had dug deep under the tree, the construction workers found a pot filled with silver and gold coins. This poor beggar had been literally sitting on a pot of gold; yet he had lived a life of utter deprivation. He was unaware of the treasure he was sitting on!

Are we not like that destitute beggar? An enormous treasure of *shakti* lies locked and hidden within us. But

we go through life, without ever unfolding this *shakti*, without using it for our own betterment. Little do we realise that we have the hidden potential that can transform our lives. There is a Powerhouse within us and yet we live in a state of permanent power failure!

Shariram brahma mandiram, our ancient scriptures tell us. The human body is a temple of the Lord. "I dwell within every human heart," Sri Krishna assures us in the Bhagavad Gita. Just imagine, the Almighty, the Power Supreme dwells within us. Each one of us is a potent Krishna. Yet we live like weaklings. At the slightest difficulty, before the smallest obstacle, we retreat, we give way and break down. We succumb to pressures and problems, we get caught in a vicious circle of desires. It is sad, that despite the great '*Shakti*' of Krishna within us, we despair and fall into melancholy.

Sadhu Vaswani, repeatedly urged us, "Awaken the *shakti* within you." He opened an Ashram in Rajpur and named it, The '*Shakti Ashram*'! He opened another Ashram in South India and called it, *Para Shakti Ashram*. He urged the youth to be strong, to awaken the *shakti* within; to be brave and accept the challenges of life, to tap the 'Powerhouse' of infinite energy within us.

(3)

The first thing we must do in order to awaken this *shakti*, is to turn the mind inward, towards this

Powerhouse within us. Turning inward is not easy, for our senses are constantly engaged in drawing the mind outward. Lured by the five senses, the mind roams far and wide, and begins to wander aimlessly, for these senses ignite desires, wants and needs. There is but one way to focus the mind inward; and this is the way of *Abhyasa*, of meditation. During meditation, our thoughts are withdrawn from external happenings and are focussed inward. Meditation stills the mind and creates space for serenity within us. The experience of meditation is so beautiful, that beginners are often reluctant to bring it to an end.

We may begin the practice of meditation with one hour, then extend it to two hours and finally make it to three hours. If we manage to sit in meditation for three hours continuously, we experience a mystical panorama. Meditation brings awareness: "I am not this physical body that I wear. I am the eternal *Atman*. My soul is not bound by this body or the senses. My life is precious. It is a gift from God, given to me for a specific purpose, a higher purpose." When this realisation dawns on us, we rise above our lower self, the self of the ego, the self of passion and pride, of lust and hatred and greed. When we abandon this ego self, we realise the Vedic injunction: *Tat Twam Asi!* That art thou!

It is our great mistake to identify ourselves with the physical body. Besides this 'ego self', we are blessed with a higher potent energy, called the higher-self, the larger-self, the true-self, which the Gita describes

as The Self-Supreme. Within each one of us is the Universal Self, the self that makes us one with all that is, with the life force of this universe.

(4)

Meditation helps us to understand and experience this higher self. The higher self is 'shakti' power unlimited and infinite. This Higher Self is indestructible. No weapon can kill it, no fire can burn it, no ocean can drown it and no wind can wipe it dry. It is Eternal.

When I was young, my mind was always in a whirl of doubts and questions. I often went to Gurudev Sadhu Vaswani, to find answers to the questions that troubled me. He would suggest that I enter into silence, into meditation, to clear my own doubts. He taught me that meditation clarifies the mind, and enables us to find answers from within. As he said to us, again and again, within each one of us is an enormous 'shakti', – an eternal Powerhouse of energy. We only have to sit in meditation, enter into silence, go deep within to set that 'Powerhouse' in operation.

Once you begin to practise silence, you will realise the transitory nature of human life. You will begin to ask yourself, "Who am I? What is the purpose of my life?" This is why, the *sadhana*, the discipline of going within through silence, is termed as the best method of self enquiry. This is why our saints and sages and

holy men urge us to meditate, for it is the way of self realisation, the way of tapping the power within.

Some of us may find it difficult to practise meditation. The practice of silence is an easier option. Close your eyes and listen with your inner consciousness, to the voice of the great ones. Utter the Name Divine, and your favourite words from the scriptures in the silent centre of your soul. I firmly believe that a silent prayer is far more powerful than the spoken prayer. One verse from *Guru Bani* which I love to hear again and again within my heart is:

O Lord, the redeemer of pain and suffering, O Father of the fatherless, Nanak seeks refuge under your protection.

Reciting such verses from the holy scriptures will bond you with your Higher Self. You will keep on sinking deeper and deeper within, until you perceive the beautiful interior-space of your immortal soul. You will now experience the kind of peace and joy that surpasses all worldly pleasures you have ever felt. You will, by now have found the power of the spirit within you.

We have passed through many lives. We have accumulated the *vasanas* of evil thoughts, words and deeds. We are imprisoned by the *karmic* bonds of our previous births, so much so that they have become the shackles of our present existence. We carry the yoke of negative *karmas* and we long to break free, like the pathetic fish caught in the nets of the trawler.





Don't let anyone tell you that escape from the snare is impossible! Liberation is yours for the asking. You can make your life anew. For man is not a creature of his destiny. He is the creator of his destiny.

If you wish to create your own destiny, you must be free of the burden of your past; you must erase the past through *sadhana*, through the realisation of your true self. You must create a new space within, sow new thoughts of true liberation and freedom thereon. You must learn to meditate, you must go into silence; you must chant the Name of God within your heart. This will help you tap the latent power within you; it will open the reservoir of *shakti* that is deep inside your spirit. Once you experience this power, a new serenity, a vital energy will flow into your life. You will find this experience so uplifting, that you will overcome all the limitations of your physical existence, and rise above the restrictions of your external environment.

Let me repeat, you are not the pathetic weakling you take yourself to be. You are a spark of the Supreme-Self. You are a child of God. His power and energy are yours. Only three things are essential to unleash the hidden power within you—

- (1) Silence and Meditation
- (2) Self-control and Self-discipline
- (3) Selfless service or giving away of oneself



If our attention is on
sufferings they get
magnified beyond all
proportions.

Therefore focus your
attention on God.

Bullocks With Blinkers On Their Eyes

(1)

Let me share with you, a beautiful prayer in the words of my Gurudev, Sadhu Vaswani:

Far away from you, I have wandered.

Show me the way, shower your Grace on me.

Wherever I am, wherever I may be, whatever I may do,

In every thought, in every word, keep me close to your heart!

A wanderer can never be happy. A vagabond can never experience stillness.

Are we not, all of us, vagabonds and wanderers?

Birth after birth have we wandered. Lifetime after lifetime, one *janma* after another have we inhabited this world of illusion, as vagabonds from one incarnation to another. And the wandering still continues.

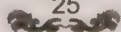
What is the root cause of this wandering? It is alienation from God, separateness from the Source of all life. We keep ourselves apart from God, the Creator of this universe. How can the lotus bloom without water? How can the *rajanigandha* spread its fragrance without moonlight? How can man ever be happy without God?

Once I was invited to visit a great scholar, who was a professor at a university. He had a magnificent house. He took me to his study which was well furnished. The cupboards were stacked with books of every kind. On the wall of the study hung a painting which caught my attention. It was the picture of a yoked bullock, with blinkers on its eyes, drawing a heavily laden cart.

"That is an unusual painting," I observed.

My host replied, "This painting was gifted to my father by his Gurudev. He was asked by his Gurudev to meditate on this picture, for this picture symbolises the human condition."

True, man is like the bullock in the picture, his eyes behind blinkers, bearing the yoke of life. The grinding routine of his life continues ceaselessly. Just as a bullock trudges and trudges mile after mile, and is unaware of where he is going, man wanders through this life. He struggles through this life, he puts in a lot of effort to earn his livelihood; he performs rituals, prays and worships at the altar; he fasts and goes without food and water. He visits temples and other



places of pilgrimage; he goes to *satsang*, but at the end of it all he finds his life unchanged. All that effort has got him nowhere.

(2)

Let me tell you the story of three drunkards. One night, after a heavy bout of drinking they wandered off to a beach. Here, they spotted a boat at the jetty.

“Why don’t we take a boat ride,” suggested one of the alcoholics. His friends readily agreed. They climbed into the boat and began to paddle. Throughout the night, they paddled the boat. They were tired and exhausted. In their drunken state, they felt that they had sailed miles and miles into the sea. But in the morning, as the sun rose, they looked around and found that they had not moved even an inch! They were still on the beach, at the very same spot from where they had started. The boat was firmly hooked on to the jetty. In other words, the boat was bound fast and strong. Man’s condition is similar to that of the drunkards, who paddled throughout the night, without unlatching, unbinding and unhooking the boat.

Free yourself! Unhitch yourself from the world of *maya*. Be unbound, and feel the supreme joy of freedom. Heed the call of saints: “O Man, do not wander from port to port. O Man, do not be a slave of desires which hook you to the world. Set yourself free.”

Many of us think we are free, that we have a choice in all we do. But in reality we are not free. We are 'bound' to our desires and wishes.

You will not like it when I tell you that you are a prisoner of yourself. Let me ask you to do a little introspection. Ask yourself whether you are truly free from all desires, ambitions, wishes and cravings. You will have to admit the truth, that you are a slave of your desires and dreams. If you are 'caged' by your own desires, if you are a 'prisoner' of your own passions, then how can you consider yourself free? How can you be happy? How can you enjoy the bliss which is your birthright?

Benjamin Franklin, an American philosopher, was once asked by a woman, "Having everything, yet is man unhappy. What is the cause of man's sorrow?"

In reply, Benjamin offered her a practical demonstration. Calling his little son to his side, he gave the boy an apple. The child was very happy to receive the apple. His eyes sparkled with joy. Benjamin gave him another apple, and the boy took it in his other hand. Now, both his little hands were full with the juicy red apples. Benjamin gave him a third apple. The child was overwhelmed with joy, but as he tried to hold the third apple, all three apples fell to the ground. The child began to cry!

Benjamin said to the woman, "Can you see the cause of man's sorrow? He tends to be unhappy in spite of having everything."

Man is unhappy because he always desires to have more, much more than he needs. The child was perfectly happy when he received one apple. He was thrilled when he received two apples. But when he got the third apple, he began to cry. We are like the child. We want more and more. We are overcome by excessive desire. We become greedy. Greed is the cause of unhappiness. Our desires multiply and keep us bound to material possessions. We are never content. It is only contentment that brings joy and peace within.

(3)

Gautama Buddha realised this two thousand years ago. He saw the human condition, trapped in sorrow and desires, burning in the fires of *trishna*. He saw, too, that this suffering was universal.

The Buddha was determined to find a cure for the world's sorrow. Enlightenment came to him and he realised that desire is the root cause of all suffering. Desire is the great foe of man. "Quench the flames of desire," Buddha urged his followers. "Give up your desires and you shall find peace within."

I am amazed at how people are led by their desires. I was once invited to a house-warming gathering. The owner of the house showed me the expensive fitted furniture that he had specially ordered for the new house. But, it seemed to me that his happiness was tinged with anxiety and fear for the future. "I am afraid I have exceeded the budget that I set for myself," he said to me in private. "It will be a tough job to

repay the mortgage on this house. I shall not be in peace till I have paid off the housing loan.”

Furniture, curtains, modular kitchens, fitted bathrooms and expensive carpets are not enough to make a man happy. Happiness comes from within and not from external expensive things or possessions. If we want to be happy, we should opt out of this mad race for material possessions. We should reduce our wants and control our desires. Therefore, Sadhu Vaswani said to us, again and again: Follow the little way, the humble way, the way of service. Live for others and not for yourself.

When you look for happiness, you are not likely to find it. When you lose yourself, you find the Beloved, you find the Lord Himself. You realise then that true happiness is in self-realisation.

This miracle will happen in your life too, when you accept the will of God. Whatever you do, whatever you aspire to, should be in tune with the Divine Will. Therefore, make this the mantra of your life. Not my will, but Thy Will be done, Lord. In every circumstance, in every situation, during every crisis, every trauma, accept the Will of God!

Wah Wah Prabhu! All that has happened has happened for the best; all that happens now is the best that can happen; all that will happen in the future will also be for the best. Whatever God does, whatever He wills can only be good for me! Whatever He will do in the future, will also be for my own

good! If we cultivate this spirit of acceptance, sorrow and suffering will vanish from our lives.

A brother once came to me in great distress. He was inconsolable. He had lost ten crore rupees, in a failed business venture. No matter how we comforted him, he refused to be consoled. His son murmured to me, "May be when he gains the ten crores that he has lost, he will be happy." To this I replied, "No one can be happy with wealth alone. Real happiness comes only from the acceptance of every situation as the Will of God. God knows what we need, when we need and how we need it!"

Let me repeat to you, it is not the external material wealth which will give us joy, but the right inner attitude which will bring us happiness and peace.

God gives us many gifts, but if He takes away any one of them, we feel miserable and inconsolable. We begin to blame God. Why me? Why did this have to happen to me? How could God be so unkind to me? We begin to question His wisdom. We refuse to submit to His will. Little do we realise that there can be no happiness, no lasting peace for those who do not surrender to the divine will.

I have often shared this beautiful prayer with my friends. Let me repeat it to you!

Thou knowest everything, Beloved,

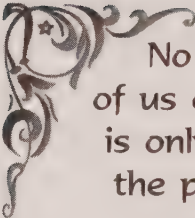
Let Thy Will always be done!

In joy and sorrow, my Beloved,

Let Thy Will always be done!

Happiness belongs to those who are immersed in the faith that God can never fail us. In all that happens to us, in all the incidents and accidents of life, there is a meaning of His Mercy, if only we could be tuned to His will. The Great Universe has a perfect scheme of things and whatever happens, has a meaning and a purpose, which is good for us. We should accept the Divine Will, and look upon all that happens to us as '*prasad*' from God! Such an attitude can be cultivated by praying to God, in the words of Sadhu Vaswani:

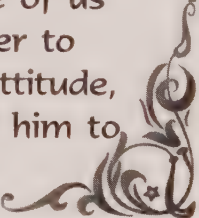
 'Keep me close to your heart,
 Let me not wander,
 In joy and in sorrow,
Thy Will, not mine, be done, O Lord!'



No one outside
of us can harm us. It
is only we who have
the power to harm
ourselves.

It is very easy to lay
the blame on another.

But, remember, that
no one outside of us
has the power to
influence our attitude,
until we permit him to
do so.



Does God Have Favourites?

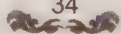
(1)

It always gives me great pleasure to see young men and women attending the *satsang*. I firmly believe that *satsang* is good for all ages, all stages of man's life. People often make the mistake of assuming that *satsang* is the prerogative of older people, who have more or less withdrawn from active life and wish to have nothing further to do with the world and its affairs. On the other hand, *satsang* can teach all of us, young and old alike, how to lead our worldly life and conduct our worldly affairs in the right spirit, in the right manner and with the right attitude. We would do well to remember that God's grace is not akin to a Pension Fund, reserved for senior citizens! It is Grace Abounding for us all, now and forever. We do not have to be sixty-five years old to attain God's grace. It came to Bhakta Prahlada when he was still a child; it came to Dhruva when he was still a little boy. Age is not a factor that determines our link with God.

Sometime ago, a young man came to meet me. He had been attending *satsang* quite regularly. He was intelligent and well read, and even in his young age, he had a yearning to follow the spiritual path. He told me that he regularly used to practise the discipline of *maun* (observing silence) as part of his spiritual *sadhana*. In the stillness of silence, he would ask himself many questions and seek answers to them in his deeper consciousness. But there was one particular question in his mind which bothered him a great deal. This often happens in life. Doubts and questions arise in our minds, from time to time. These questions often confuse us and slow down our spiritual progress.

This young man too, was troubled by a question. He asked me, "In the *satsang* we are told time and again that we have to put in our own efforts to achieve self-realisation, and that this involves a lot of hard work, discipline and self-control. On the other hand, we are told, that for our spiritual progress, the grace of God is necessary. Could you please explain to me what is it that I need the most? My own effort or the grace of God?"

The answer to this question can be found in our sacred scriptures. In the Bhagavad Gita, we are told, that nothing will happen on this earth without the grace of God. No amount of hard work, no amount of sincere effort will bear fruit without the grace of the Guru. No matter how great your *tapsya*, no matter how regularly and religiously you chant the Name Divine and worship God, you will achieve



nothing without the grace of God. Until and unless we are blessed with His Divine grace, we cannot even touch His Lotus Feet. The *Atman* chooses whom it wills.

The young man said to me, "My confusion is confounded, when, on the one hand, you ask us to put in effort and on the other hand you insist that nothing can happen without God's grace and that this grace is showered on those whom He chooses. Does God have His favourites? Is He partial to some of us?"

I think, in the interests of many young people who aspire to follow the spiritual path, this is a fundamental question which needs to be addressed.

A sister whom I knew used to laugh away the whole issue. She would often say, "Why put in effort? Let the grace of God be bestowed on me as and when He chooses. In the meanwhile, I shall continue to eat, drink, sing, dance and be merry in this beautiful world which He has created for me to live in. Why put in any effort and yearn for liberation before my appointed time arrives? Such forwardness can only lead to unhappiness and frustration. He knows best, and His grace will come to me at the right time and in the right season."

"God will make me a monk, without earning monkhood." "His Divine grace will reward me with sainthood, without working for it." This seemed to be the philosophy of her life.

There are people who keep working for this spiritual progress, irrespective of its hardships or hindrances. They work for this progress without any expectations. Whatever they do is out of love for the Lord. It is a dedicated life which they choose to lead, a life of utter devotion.

On the other hand there are some, who give up their efforts easily and blame God for His partiality. They complain that they have given up all enjoyment of clubs, cinemas, TV, discos but still do not find favour with God. Frustrated, they abandon this path.

Let me illustrate this with a beautiful parable from Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa. It is said that Sri Ramakrishna was one day passing by fields of wheat grains. He was accompanied by a few devotees. They saw some farmers tending to the fields. Looking at them, Sri Ramakrishna said to his disciples, "Do you see those farmers working on the fields? There are two types of farmers: those who have inherited the field from their forefathers, and continue to cultivate it. Such farmers will continue to till the land and plough it and cultivate it, even if they go through a season of drought or crop failure. They continue to plough the field because it has been bequeathed to them by their ancestors. The second type are farmers who will plough the field and cultivate it as long as it yields good crops, and is profitable for them. But



they will abandon it if there are one or two seasons of crop failure.”

Sri Ramkrishna Paramahansa then said to his disciples, “You must be like the farmers of the first type. You must continue to put in your efforts, you must continue with your *sadhana* and your quest will be rewarded. Do not despair thinking that your effort will be wasted. Your efforts will definitely be rewarded when God showers His grace on you.”

A grain of grace is enough for me, O Lord! Let me have just one grain of Thy grace.

This one grain comes unexpectedly. A saint tells us how he overcame despair and frustration in his quest. He says, “One day I was tired of working. I felt despondent. At that time I reminded myself, “Dear one, what do you need? What kind of results do you expect from your efforts? If you feel that you are not rewarded for your efforts, then do not despair. You want to earn the grace of God which has always been with you. You are like a tiny fish in an ocean, which dances on the waves, drinking its waters. Then suddenly the fish begins to feel afraid; it imagines that it is drinking so much of water of the ocean, and that the ocean will soon dry up. How can one fish dry up the waters of the ocean?”

“You are like a rat, who lives in a tiny hole inside a warehouse of food grains and lives off the inexhaustible supply of spilt grains on the floor of the warehouse; and then, it begins to fear that by eating

food grains everyday, it may exhaust the entire stock of food grains in the warehouse.

How can a single rat, finish off the food grains of a large warehouse?

You are like a man who is climbing a mountain and begins to worry that every day he takes so much of oxygen from the environment, that it could lead to exhaustion of oxygen from the environment. How can you exhaust the air? The same way the grace of the Guru, the Grace of God is infinite and cannot be exhausted."

God's grace is everywhere. We only have to avail of it. In life, we do go astray and commit many sins, but there are times when we are saved from committing a mistake. There is a mystical *shakti*, an unseen force, which prevents us from committing that sin. It is the *shakti* of God's grace.

It is the grace of God, which is protecting all of us and taking care of us.

It is natural for us to ask the question, "If God's grace is so abundant, then why should we work for our self-realisation? On the other hand if we can make progress by sheer hard work, then where is the need for the grace of God?"

This question would not trouble you if you understood that you are not apart from God; you are a part of His creation, He lives in you, as He lives in every aspect of the created world. The bestower of the grace and the seeker of grace are not separate

from each other. But, surrounded by the veil of *maya*, blinded by the ego-sense, we fail to see the union of the Over-Soul and the individual soul. We labour under the illusion of separation from the Source. The bestower of Grace and the seeker, receiver of Grace are not two different entities. We yearn to have grace and we pray to a Higher Power to bestow the grace. We make a distinction between the seeker and the sought and therefore arises the problem of separation. Who is God? Who is the seeker of the grace? It is 'I'.

In reality 'I' is only an ego and it is this ego which tries to give us a separate identity. It is ego which separates us from others. A sense of separation is born of this ego sense. The ego separates us from others. And it is this ego which seeks God's grace. The truth is God's grace is always there. It is showered on all of us. But because of our sense of separateness we feel the need for grace. Grace is like sunshine. When the sun shines, its energy is universal and yet some buds blossom and others fade away. Those buds which fade away are the ones who have not learnt to absorb the sunshine within. In other words the buds are reluctant to receive the sun's energy.

We have to be receptive to grace. The grace of God is all abounding; it is everywhere. All we have to do is to be receptive to it. Take the example of a room which has doors and windows – but all of them are shut. Even when the sun shines bright, the room remains in darkness. On the other hand the room which keeps its doors and windows open is flooded


with sunshine. We too should keep the windows of our hearts and souls open and allow the sunshine of grace to flow in.

Look at the rain, there are people who hold an umbrella to protect themselves and hence do not receive the heavenly abundance of rain. On the other hand there are those who let go off their umbrellas and enjoy the bounty of rainfall which the heavens send. We should also do away with the umbrella of the ego, which covers us and prevents us from receiving the grace of the Guru.

We cannot achieve self-realisation only through personal efforts, because in doing so we are only giving a lift to our ego. Once the veil of the ego is removed, awareness will dawn that what I was searching is there with me and within me. When the ego goes, God glows. It is an automatic process. Hence, the question of God's favouritism or partiality in giving grace does not arise. All that is needed is to erase the ego.

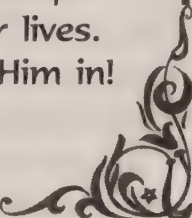
We should continue to put in efforts without expectation of any reward. Our nights should be spent in a dialogue with God and our days should be spent in the service of poor and broken humanity.

And surely, one day our ego will disappear and enlightenment will dawn on us that what I was seeking is within myself!



God is the goal of life.
And God is to be
realised – not merely
'understood' or talked
about.

Long have we kept
God out of our lives.
It's time to let Him in!



God Within

(1)

It is said that God was displaced from the central position He occupied in man's existence, when the 20th Century began. They cite several reasons for this too – such as the disbelief and cynicism created by Darwin's Theory of Evolution, the quantum progress in Science and Technology, and man's increasingly materialistic way of life.

Has God lost the prominence He was accorded centuries ago? I think the question is illogical. How can the Omnipotent 'lose' prominence and power? If we rephrase the question and ask ourselves: "Are we giving less importance, less prominence to God in our lives?" my answer would still be negative. Despite atheism, agnosticism, rationalism and other doubting trends, I think man's faith in God remains unshaken. External forms of worship may have changed; church-going, *tirtha yatras* and *yagnas* may have reduced; but man's need for God is greater than ever!



"If God were not real, it would be necessary to invent Him," said a wise cynic. Those of us who believe in God, know that there is no need to take the trouble of 'inventing' Him. He is, and He ever will be, now and in the millennia to come. But if you were to ask me, "Where is God?" I would take considerable time and trouble to tell you how to find Him. For, the truth is, that some of us have lost direct contact with Him over the years. Of course, we continue to believe in Him; we say our prayers regularly; we attend *satsang* or worship at the temple; we observe *poojas* and rituals and festivals; we accept *prasad* respectfully; but in the secret recesses of the heart, the question arises again and again: Where is God? How may I find Him?

It is not that God is lost to the world, but that we have lost touch with Him! I think, when most people raise this question, 'Where is God?' they are expressing a deep felt need not merely to 'find' Him, but to make Him real in their lives.

And so, time and again the question arises: Where is God? Life makes us go through varied experiences—some pleasant, some unpleasant. And the question persists, where is God? Often we think of God living up, above us, somewhere up in the sky, in what we vaguely term as heaven. Whenever I ask people, where is God, they raise their finger upward and point out to the sky. "There He lives," they say. Others say that God resides in the temples; some people proclaim grandly, that He can be found everywhere!

God lives above, and in fact, in each one of those places mentioned. But most important of all, He resides in each and every heart. When the veil of ignorance is removed, man becomes aware that all that he sees around him, all that is, is a manifestation of the Lord. Sadly, in our tendency to give weightage to what we perceive with the external senses, we are overwhelmed by the world and our worldly life to such an extent, that the subtlety of God's presence is lost upon us. We are taken in by the glittering garments, and fail to perceive the essence of the Spirit within!

This is difficult for most people, but we must realise that this world which so overwhelms, overawes us, is only a transit lounge; and that we are only travellers on this planet earth. Never ever forget that your stay here is temporary. That this world is a Traveller's Inn. And it is futile to bond with it and be caught in the net of attachment.

(2)

We are travellers, we are pilgrims and we have to return to our true native homeland. Our native home, the realm of Light is often called God. Our pilgrimage is to the Eternal which is our true home. The purpose of our temporary visit to this earth is to make progress towards the heavenly world of Light. The world around is ephemeral, giving us temporary

joy with its wealth and luxuries. We are satisfied with a little praise and a little honour. We are satisfied with what the world gives us. But the man who becomes aware of the transitory nature of his existence on this earth realises that this world is illusory, impermanent. He becomes aware that we have come to this earth for a higher purpose. And the purpose is to realise the Self. And the question I raised earlier now assumes prominence in the life of the seeker. "Where is God? How can I find Him?"

Then begins the serious, persistent search for God. This is the quest that has taken *yogis*, *rishis*, *munis* and *jignasus* to river banks, to *tapobanas*, to mountain tops, to temples and shrines. Realised souls find Him whom they seek, without too much trouble. But the rest of us are not so fortunate. We wander hither and thither; many places beckon us and we are lost in these wanderings.

I may narrate here an incident from the life of a *Sufi* Saint by the name Bayazid. Bayazid revered his mother and with her blessings became aware of the futility of this world. He went out in search of Truth. He used to live in Baghdad. He travelled to Iran, he also came to India. He visited temples and mosques. He paid his obeisance at Mecca and Madina and yet his search was incomplete. He did not find his Beloved, the One without a second, the One he was seeking.

One day as he was sitting in meditation, he saw himself at the door of heaven. There he found that the throne of God was vacant. He enquired with the

Angels, "Where has Allah gone?" The Angels replied, that Allah had left His throne and gone away and it was a long time since he had left, for Allah had made His throne in every human heart. The truth then struck Bayazid, that He whom we all seek is not to be found *out there*, but is actually within us.

He is within each one of us. Quench the thirst for the Lord, by seeking Him within. In your heart of hearts, is the throne of your Beloved, therefore, it is essential to keep the heart pure. Our hearts are filled with filth – the filth of ego, the filth of greed, the filth of lust. We must purify our hearts so that we are able to have the vision of the Beloved. There is no need to wander far away in search of Him, for He is within.

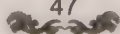
(3)

There is an interesting story narrated in our sacred scriptures. When Brahma, the creator of this Universe, made the world, he gave every man a share of human happiness. With the passage of time, people took their happiness for granted and started misusing their lives. Brahma called an assembly of the heavenly souls and asked them to suggest a solution to the misuse of happiness. Further, Brahma put the condition that happiness should be made so scarce that man does not find it easily. Many suggestions poured in. One suggestion was to bury happiness deep down in the earth. To this Brahma replied, man

can easily dig the earth and get happiness. Another suggestion was to hide happiness in the depths of the ocean. To this Brahma replied, that man will dive to the bed of the ocean and will bring out happiness. The heavenly souls put their heads together and yet could not find a place which was inaccessible to man. Finally, after intense debate and discussions, they arrived at the solution: the place that is most inaccessible to man is the depths of his own heart! Therefore, it was decided that happiness should be hidden in the heart of man. For man will never easily find it there. He will search for it outside and will roam far and wide to have it. It would never occur to him that what he seeks is right within him.

This is the case with us. When the yearning for the Lord arises, we wander here and there, searching for Him high and low, until a day comes, when with the grace of God, we realise that what we were searching outside desperately, actually lies within us. Therefore, we must learn to go within. We must purify our heart, cleanse it to get the vision of the Lord.

For many of us, this is not easy. Time and again we succumb to temptations and are stirred by evil thoughts. We become victims of many vices. We do all this for a passing sensation of pleasure, a fleeting sense impression of joy. And unless and until we satisfy the senses, these vicious thoughts will continue to obsess us, taking us away from our true purpose. Once we are caught in the net of vices, it is difficult to come out. Our misery is unbearable and it is then,



that we repent and weep and promise ourselves that we will not fall a prey to such evil vices.

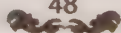
Keep the heart pure. Whenever the senses are aroused, be vigilant, and assert your mastery over the senses. Remember, it is he who has mastered the senses, who can realise his true self. He who is a slave to passions, can never ever achieve self-realisation. Therefore, be on your guard all the time. Instead of keeping an eye on other people's doings, it would be better to take care of our own doings.

There are five vices, which, like thieves, quietly enter the heart and rob you of your true treasure, the treasure of the *Atman*. Gurudev Sadhu Vaswani in his sacred verse says, "O wake up sentinel (*chowkidar*), O wake up! Chase the thief away."

Those on the spiritual path, continually ask this question: What should we do to quench our thirst for the Lord?

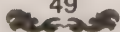
(4)

If you wish to have the vision of the Lord, the first step is to develop a bond with God. God cannot be realised through the intellect, through book knowledge and words. God cannot be understood through words, though it is true, we talk about God only through the medium of language. Whenever a tragedy occurs or we go through a trauma, we cry out in anguish: Where is God? The question is asked because we



have not built up any relationship with God. We must create a relationship with God. We must know God: And knowing God is an experience very similar to that of knowing your own brother, your sister, your friend, your spouse. Did anyone have to formally introduce you to your mother, father, brother or sister? Did you have to attend lectures or workshops on the importance of family relationships? Did you have to have lessons on building bonds with your spouse and children? These beautiful bonds came naturally to you, didn't they? So it must be with God. Make God real in your daily life. Otherwise you will not be able to experience Him or find Him by your side. But to forge a relationship with Him we must surrender ourselves to Him. The act of surrender is very important. All that you have and all that you are, must be surrendered to God; we should think and we should be convinced that we belong to God. This will build an unbreakable bond with Him and then God will become as real as the sun in our lives.

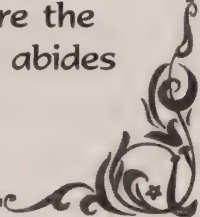
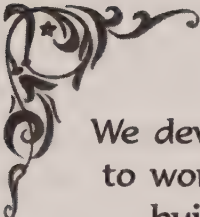
God is not to be found in scriptures, in books or in discourses. God is to be experienced. And this experience comes only when we build a bond with Him. By all means do your daily routine, but find some time to meditate. Meditation awakens the hidden *shakti* within us and through this *shakti* we can feel and experience God. This does not mean that you abandon all your worldly duties and be engrossed in worship. God needs instruments to work for Him. He needs hands and feet to plough the fields. When



we surrender to God, we surrender fully, hands, feet and all that we accomplish with our limbs, senses and minds. We live in this world, we perform our tasks, but with this sense of offering, *arpanam*: “O Lord, I am utterly dedicated to Thee. All that I am, all that I have and all that I do, are an offering unto Thee!”

Self surrender and dedication find their best expression in selfless service. Go out in the world and mitigate human suffering. Serve the poor and the needy with love in your heart. We have come here to fulfill our destiny, to fulfill the purpose for which He created us, and not to lead a life of mindless pleasure and laziness. Whether it is day or night, we have to work. The night is not for us to sleep. The night is to express our deep yearning for the Lord. Awake or asleep, feel the love, the bond and the presence of God. Call out, “O Lord, my heart, my soul is all for Thee.” Whatever work we do should be a loving dedication to the Supreme Power. Love should be the centrifugal point of all our activities. For, as I always tell my friends, love is not an attribute of God, Love is God. If we live and act in the awareness of that beautiful love, our life would indeed be richly blessed.





We devote our energy
to worldly pursuits –
building bigger
houses, buying bigger
and faster cars,
acquiring more
wealth and power –
while we ignore the
divine self that abides
in us.

Now Is The Time: Here Is The Place

(1)

What is your most valuable possession? If you have ever asked yourself this question you will know that it will be a while before you hit upon the right answer. You will have to consider all your assets; you will think about movable and immovable properties; perhaps you will need to evaluate your stocks and shares and capital investments. Some of you may perhaps feel a sense of satisfaction. Many of you may feel a little disappointed and think, "Is that all I am worth?"

One million, ten million is not a lot of money these days, some of you might say. Let me take you down memory lane to a time when ten rupees was a great deal of money!

It was August 2, 1921. I was celebrating my third birthday. A family friend happened to drop in, to

visit my mother. On being told that it was my birthday, she blessed me and handed over a brand new ten rupee note to me. A ten rupee note was a small fortune in those days.

Usually, whenever children were given gifts in cash, their mothers would swiftly put away the money to be spent on something useful and worthwhile. On that day my mother was preoccupied in entertaining this guest and she forgot to take the money from me. As for me, I was delighted to have my own ten rupee note, and holding it proudly in my hand, I stood on the doorstep, hoping everyone would see what a fortune I possessed.

A candyman passed by and seeing the ten rupee note in my hand, he put his wares down and began to woo me as a valuable customer. He tempted me with his alluring display of sweets. He said to me, "What will you do with a mere piece of paper? Give it to me and I will give you as many sweets as you like in exchange."

As a child, I was thrilled with this offer. Truly, the ten rupee note now seemed worthless. Sensing that I was now ready to yield, the candyman added, "You can take as many candies as you like." I was too excited for words. I handed the ten rupee note to him and took as many candies as I could in my two tiny hands. In my heart of hearts, I regretted not having worn a coat with deep pockets, where I could have stuffed many more candies! In a few minutes

the candyman left with a huge smile and I was thrilled with my bargain.

A few days passed, and suddenly my mother remembered the ten rupee note given to me on my birthday. "My child, where is the ten rupee note which auntie gave you?" she enquired.

I thought it safe to pretend ignorance. "What ten rupee note? Which ten rupee note?" I asked her very innocently.

She reminded me about the birthday gift from her friend.

I said to her, "O, that piece of paper? I gave it away to a candyman. In exchange for it the candyman gave me lots and lots of sweets. It was a good bargain, trading that piece of paper for a heap of candies."

My mother was naturally upset. Gently, she admonished me, "You are a foolish boy. Do you know the value of that piece of paper? You could have bought sweets for all the children in the street and still have money left over to buy yourself a few toys with that ten rupee note."

That set me thinking. Alas, I had not been able to gauge the worth of that piece of paper. I did not know the value of my gift.

Since then, I have asked myself over and over again: What is the most precious thing in this world? I reflected over my mother's words for many years. At last I found the answer to the question which I

posed to you earlier – the most precious thing in this world is the human birth, which you and I simply take for granted. Indeed, there is nothing more precious than the gift of life.

But alas, we do not know the worth of this great gift. Guru Arjundev tells us, *Ratan tyag kaudi sang rachai*. “Abandoning jewels, you have sought empty shells.” I find these words potent with deep meaning. These words open the window to a new horizon of the spirit. All along, we have wasted our life collecting empty shells, running after shadow-shapes. We have failed to gather those precious jewels which are our true legacy. We spend a lifetime, earning more and more money, in acquiring more and more possessions, in enjoying all the luxuries that money can buy, and in running after name and fame. It is only when the call of death is heard, that realisation dawns on us – we have thrown away our most valuable gift. But by then, it is too late.

(2)

Why is this human birth so precious? The answer is simple. It is only through the human birth that we can attain liberation. It is only through the human birth that we can rid ourselves of the burden of *karma* and break from the bond of life, death and rebirth. That is why it is said that even in the heavenly world, good and noble souls yearn for this human

birth. The purpose of the human birth is to work towards a higher life, the life beautiful. But sadly, many of us fritter away this life in worthless pursuits, little realising the value of that which we throw away so carelessly!

Let me tell you the story of a poor farmer, who inherited a small plot of land from his father. It was a tiny field, a stony tract of land. The farmer set out to plough the land, and found that the plough was obstructed by stones. Grumbling, he threw away as many stones as he could, and continued his ploughing.

The field was ploughed and sown with the crop. And still, the shiny red stones continued to lie around. The farmer would throw them at the birds or use them in his catapult to scare the birds away.

One day, as he was late returning home, his wife brought his lunch to the field. Her eyes fell upon one of the shiny red stones, and she picked it up saying, "This stone is so beautiful! I shall take it home and give it to our daughter to play with."

"Take as many of these as you like," said the farmer. "There were dozens of them lying around, and I have thrown away many of them." But though his wife searched for them, she could not find another like the one she had picked up. So she took the stone home and gave it to her little girl.

A few days later, a wealthy jeweller passed by their house, when he caught sight of the girl playing with the shiny red stone. He stopped short in his

tracks, and took the stone from the child and examined it closely. Amazed, he said to the child, "Can I see your father?"

The farmer came out of the cottage to greet the visitor. "Where did you get this stone from?" the jeweller asked him anxiously. "It is one of the rarest and most precious gems in the world! If you give me a few more like this, I shall give you a fortune in exchange! We don't find such large gems any more. You have probably hit upon an ancient buried treasure."

Can you imagine the farmer's reaction? He had thrown away all his treasure, not knowing its true worth!

Every moment, every breath of this life is precious, like the valuable gems that the farmer threw away in his ignorance.

Many years ago, a saint of Sind, emphasised the value of every breath of life, when he said, "If any one offered me the position of the President or Prime Minister in exchange for just one breath of my life, I would decline the offer, because the value of each breath is far greater than position, power, name and fame."

I urge you, I earnestly beseech you, be aware that every breath of life is precious! Spend every moment, every minute in the consciousness that life is a gift from God. It is only through the human birth that we can achieve self-realisation, and return to God, to abide forever in *moksha*, our ultimate liberation.

I recall with gratitude a valuable lesson that Sadhu Vaswani taught me. One day the Master expressed a desire to have some fruits for breakfast. Eager to please him in every way I could, I asked him, "Gurudev, what fruit would you like to eat? Tell me and I will get it for you immediately!"

Sadhu Vaswani looked at me and smiled. "I think I would like to eat a few cherries," he said to me.

"I will get them immediately," I said and rushed off to the market in a tearing hurry. I searched high and low, but there were no cherries to be found for love or money. Every vendor gave me the same reply, "The season for cherries is over. You will not find them now."

Tired, dispirited and crestfallen, I returned to the Master. "Forgive me Gurudev," I said to him, "try as I might, I simply could not find any cherries."

Sadhu Vaswani said to me, "There is a season for everything. Once the season is over, we cannot avail of its benefits."

Come April, and mangoes make their appearance in India's colourful markets. In May and June we are hardly likely to find any fruit except mangoes on the streets and in the handcarts and stalls of the fruit vendors. Come July, the mangoes start to disappear. In August, you will pay a heavy price for the rare mango; and in September, you cannot find mangoes

no matter how hard you try. There is a time, a season for everything. If this season gets over, it will not come back again!

Well, you may wait for the next mango season or cherry season. But life does not easily give us a second chance. This life has been given to us for our spiritual evolution. And now is the time to begin. If this season is over it will not come back!

Whatever is most important to us, must be done now. And the most important thing for all of us is the higher life that we seek. Therefore we should start the work now. Now is the time. Now is the right season.

Even the best of us is likely to be confused over what is most important in our life.

(4)

Let me tell you of Rabia and Hasan Darvesh. Once, Rabia was sitting on the banks of a river when Hasan Darvesh came over to see her. He threw his straw mat into the waters of the river, and, turning to Rabia, he said, "Rabia, come, let us sit upon this mat and meditate." Hasan Darvesh had acquired extraordinary powers (*siddhis*), whereby he could stay afloat on the water. He wanted to demonstrate his power to Rabia and the world.

But Rabia saw through this. She felt that it would only be a public display to impress people and not really

an exercise in meditation. She said to Hasan, "If you want to meditate on God, I have a better way."

Rabia then threw her prayer mat in the air and said to Hasan Darvesh, "Come, let us rise in the air and meditate."

Hasan was taken aback. He replied, "This is beyond me. I can only float on the water. That is the extent of my power."

Rabia said to him, "What you can do even a fish can do; and what I can do, a tiny fly can also do. But we are neither fish to float in the water, nor flies to fly in the air. Let us not forget the real purpose and the true goal for which we have received this human birth."

Sant Kabir says, *"What you can do tomorrow, do it today. What you can do today, do it right now. For the holy ones tell us that this human birth is rare and precious."*

Any good thing that you wish to do tomorrow, do it today, don't postpone it, do it right now.

Our time is limited and we should not waste it in false pursuits. This life of ours is rare and precious and not a moment should be wasted.

One night, a man came to me around the hour of midnight. Surprised, I asked him, "What brings you here at this late hour?" He replied, "I have come to give Rs. 25,000/- for the service of the poor."

A little surprised, I murmured, "But what is the hurry? Surely we cannot carry out service of the poor at this hour?"

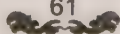
The brother replied, "I was lying in bed, when the thought came to me that I should donate something for the poor. I did not want to wait till the morning, for who knows what might happen between now and tomorrow? I might change my mind during that time, or I might not live to see the morrow. And so I came running to you at this late hour. God gave me a good thought and I want to translate this good thought into a good act right now. I don't want to postpone this till tomorrow, for tomorrow may never come."

My dear friends, if you wish to do a good deed, do it now. Do not wait for the right moment, the appropriate moment, the auspicious moment, for it will never come.

Whether it is a good deed which you wish to perform or a spiritual *sadhana* that you wish to practise, the right time is NOW.

(5)

Many years ago, someone said to me that it was good to practise meditation at the auspicious and sacred hour of *brahma mahurat*, that is, between 4 and 6 early in the morning. I was determined to follow his advice. But, try as I might, I could not wake up so early in the morning. I would sleep over, I would postpone it to another time. Every day I told myself, today let me sleep a bit, tomorrow I shall wake up at the dawn. In this way, a whole year passed by. I was appalled. I chided myself severely.



"Enough is enough," I said to myself. "I shall not sleep tonight; I shall not allow the sacred hour to slip by." At long last, with great determination, I trained my mind and accomplished my purpose.

It is said of Mahatma Gandhi, that once when he was in jail, he came across a very poor man who served him graciously. Gandhiji said to him, "If ever you are in need of anything, do come to me. I will do whatever I can."

Many years passed. There was famine in the poor man's village. Remembering Gandhiji's words, the man went to Gandhiji's ashram. At that time Gandhiji was in an important meeting. The man sent Gandhiji a message: "I hope you remember me; we were together in jail and you had promised that you would help me whenever I needed it. I would like to take up your kind offer of help now, if you will permit me."

As luck would have it, Gandhiji was preoccupied with the meeting, and he could not go and meet the man then and there.

When the meeting was over, Gandhiji sent for him, but the poor man had left by then. He had gone away thinking that Gandhiji might have forgotten their days together in the jail. After all, he thought, Gandhiji was a great man and he, only a poor, downtrodden peasant. He was mistaken, for Gandhiji was a kind and sensitive soul.

Gandhiji sent people in search of the man, but he could not be found. Neither his address nor his



whereabouts were known to anyone. Gandhiji was despondent. He repented the few minutes' delay which had prevented him from meeting the man. He could have very easily taken a break from the meeting and come out to meet this man. But he hadn't, and he had not been able to keep his promise to the man. Would you believe it, Gandhiji carried this regret all his life.

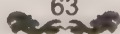
As they say, time and tide wait for no man. While we are preoccupied, life keeps speeding on.

Once, a small child went out shopping with her mother, in the city of Paris. On the way, she saw an old man holding out his shabby cap upside down in his hand. In rich cities like Paris, begging in public is not allowed. So poor men hold out their caps to get a few coins. Seeing the man, the small child said to her mother, "Mama, how much money do you have?"

The mother smiled indulgently and said to the child "Enough to buy you whatever you like."

"In that case, can I have a few coins to give to this poor man?"

The mother was angry. She said to her child. "You do not know the value of money," and she dragged the child away forcibly from the spot. She was sure that the child would forget the man after some time. But all the while they were shopping, the picture of the old man haunted the child. The mother was coaxing her to buy candy and chocolates. But the girl remained adamant, refusing all the goodies offered to her. She only said, "I don't want candies.



I don't want chocolates. Give me some money so that I can drop it in the poor man's cap." The mother, on her part, was stubborn as well. She felt that she would be losing her authority if she gave in to the child's demand. Mother and daughter returned home, after a very unhappy shopping expedition.

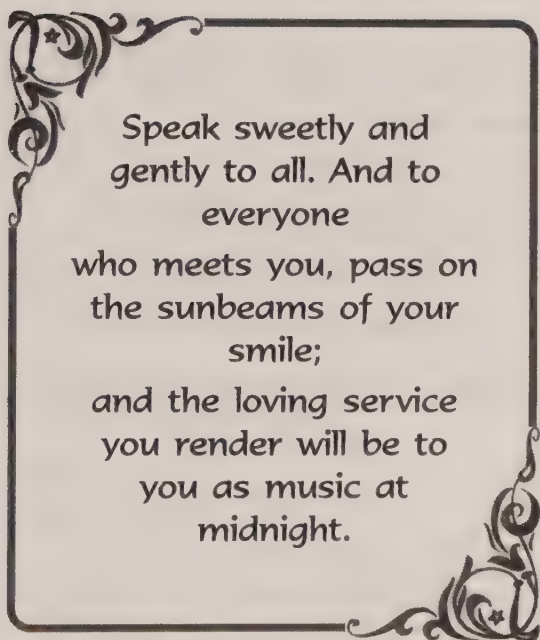
That night, the child could not sleep. She kept murmuring, "Mama, please give me some money for the poor man."

The mother was perturbed, and promised the child that she could go back next day and drop as many coins as she liked into the man's cap. It was well past midnight when the child finally fell asleep.

Next day the mother took the child to the spot where the old poor man had been, but he was nowhere to be found. The child began to weep, and the mother felt very sad.

Strange are the ways of fate! The following day, the child met with an accident and died instantly. The mother was distraught. She cried out, "What have I done? Just for a little money, I broke your heart and did not fulfill your wish. I can never ever forgive myself as long as I live!"

My dear brothers and sisters, let us put every moment of our lives to the best possible use. Let us wake up before it is too late. Let us not waste this rare opportunity of the human birth. Whatever good we can do, let us do it today, rather, let us do it now, at this very moment and be richly blessed.



Speak sweetly and
gently to all. And to
everyone
who meets you, pass on
the sunbeams of your
smile;
and the loving service
you render will be to
you as music at
midnight.

Map of Life

(1)

At the break of dawn, I heard a sweet voice
whisper in my heart:

Mitha bolan, nih chalan
Hathau bhi kuchch dey,
Rab tinaa dey paas,
Vo jhungal kiyun dhondhey.

In translation, this beautiful verse means:

Speak gently,
Walk humbly,
Give something in charity.
Then you need not to the forest go,
For the Lord is with you already!

If you do these three things dutifully, then there is no need for you to go to a forest and meditate. There is no need for you to go in quest of God. For

God, the Source of Joy and Happiness will come in quest of you – and meet you.

Sant Kabir, in one of his *slokas* sings –

Kabir man nirmal bhayaa

Jaise ganga neer,

Pachche lagoon, Har phirai, Kahai Kabir, Kabir!

Sant Kabir says: “When my heart became pure, God himself came behind me, calling out my name—Kabir, Kabir! Wait, I want to meet you. I want to speak to you.”

We would do well to remember, that we don't have to go out in quest of God, when the heart has become pure. It was Jesus who said: “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” In fact, God is in search of clean hearts and pure souls.

A veritable roadmap for the Life Beautiful is given us in those three injunctions:

- (1) Speak sweetly
- (2) Walk humbly and
- (3) Give something in charity with your own hands.

Time and again, I have appealed to my friends and fellow *satsangis*, with folded hands: Speak sweetly. Let me share with you these lines which I read somewhere:

Speak gently! It is better far
To rule by love than fear;

Speak gently! Let no harsh word mar
The good that we may do here.

(2)

I am aware that we live in a world of hectic speed. My younger friends refer to their professional life as a rat race, where speed is the 'buzz word', and everyone is in a tearing hurry. Under such conditions, they tell me, it is difficult to be gentle and sweet, at all times, to all people. "More often than not, we are forced to raise our voices and hurl harsh words at our competitors, subordinates, colleagues and friends," they inform me, with a tinge of regret and shame. Too true! I myself have seen people bickering over trifling matters.

Such behavior is ignoble. Harsh words cause deeper wounds than sticks and stones. The poet-saint, Thiruvalluvar, tells us: *Burnt flesh and skin heal sooner or later, but the wounds inflicted by a harsh tongue never, ever heal.*

Why should we be guilty of inflicting such wounds? Therefore, let us resolve to speak gently, softly, sweetly.

In India, we have the beautiful tradition of greeting everyone we meet with folded hands and the reverential greeting: Namaste! It is the God within the human form that we salute thus. If Lord Krishna Himself resides in the people we meet, why should we talk harshly to Him? Should we not be soft, gentle,

reverential and sweet to the Lord? Each one of us is an image of Lord Krishna. We should speak to each other reverently, gently and sweetly. Even if you disagree with others, and want to refute their arguments, you can do so with humility in your heart. You may disagree to comply with their requests, but you can do all this without hurting anyone, without creating discord, without using harsh words. You can negotiate with the most stubborn and egoistic individuals, using your personal charm and gentle words. This behavior will come to you naturally, if you realise that Sri Krishna is within every one. Automatically your attitude will change and you will be reverent, considerate and gentle with others.

You need not disclose to the other person that he is an image of Sri Krishna. For that may merely inflate his ego. But you should remind yourself, that Sri Krishna is seated within the hearts of all.

The second thing, necessary for us, is humility of the heart. Be humble; be humble as a blade of grass. Once Gurudev Sadhu Vaswani was asked: What kind of persons would you like to associate with? Rich and famous, intelligent and scholarly, elitist and sophisticated, or beautiful and charming? Sadhu Vaswani with a magical smile replied, "My heart moves out to those who are humble. For the humble are pure at heart. They are the loved ones." Therefore let us learn to be humble and earn the grace of God.

The third thing that all of us must follow is to give whatever we can in charity. You may give little,

you may give much, but give you must. Share your wealth with those less fortunate than you. Sadhu Vaswani used to say, "I have but one tongue. If I had a million tongues, I would still utter the one word – give, give, give!"

During my travels abroad, I exhort my *satsangi* brothers and sisters to bear witness in deeds of daily living to the ideal of 'giving'. Share as much as you can with others, I urge them. Give whatever you can to the needy ones. Some of them are not convinced by my exhortations. They give me a look which seems to say, "It is all very well for you to say give and share. But money does not grow on trees! Day by day, prices are on the rise. How can we fix a limit on our personal expenditure? How can we curb spending on our own families? And then, there are investments to be made for the future. Where is the money to spare?"

I respect all the effort you put in to provide the best for your family. I know many of you work under intense pressure to make your business prosper. But I would still say to you, share whatever you can with others. Give at least 10% of your earnings in charity. What will you do with all the wealth you accumulate here? When the call comes to vacate the house of the body and move onward to the Great Beyond, you will have to leave everything behind.

My dear brothers and sisters, look at Nature. It always gives. It gives and gives and ever gives. Think of the tree. It gives fruit to others. Does it ever eat its



own fruit? Think of the river. Does it ever drink its own water? A river flows, to slake the thirst of people. It calls out to men and women, "Come hither! Quench your thirst in my flowing waters!" Indeed, one of the primordial laws of Nature is to give. So give, give, give! Those who give truly live. Those who do not give are no better than barren trees.

The well-known American philanthropist, Andrew Carnegie, used to say: "The man who dies rich, dies disgraced." He urged the people to give away as much as they could, during their life time. He warned them not to leave anything behind.

Andrew Carnegie himself was a steel magnate, a multi millionaire. He gave away millions of dollars to found schools and colleges, libraries and museums. He firmly believed in the law of giving. His pragmatic advice was, put a limit to your personal wealth. Above that limit, whatever wealth you have accumulated, is not yours. You should not hoard it, but give it away in charity.

Sant Tulsidas tells us:

*Tulsi is sansar mein kar lijiye do kaam: dene ko
tukda bhala, lene ko Hari Naam...*

In this world, do two things. One, is to give alms, the other is to earn 'spiritual' grace by uttering the Name Divine.

Give, give, give! Give today, give now, for tomorrow may be too late! If you keep postponing your good intentions for the morrow, and if death

overtakes you, you will have to leave behind all the wealth you have accumulated. Man cannot carry anything with him beyond death. He must enter the heaven-world empty handed, for there are no systems to issue travelers cheques to this world! And no one in heaven is going to be impressed by what you have left behind. You will be asked instead, what have you brought with you to this 'other' world. In the heavenly world, the material wealth accumulated during your earthly sojourn does not count. It is the wealth of good deeds which will accompany you on the inevitable journey. Hence, my dear brothers and sisters, earn the true treasure of the spirit, accumulate the wealth of good deeds, of kind and compassionate service, for the world beyond. Every day, give something in charity; give alms with your own hands. Do good deeds, earn true grace, and be richly blessed.

To earn 'true wealth', you must practise three things: (i) Speak sweetly; (ii) walk humbly; (iii) give alms with your own hands.

Speak sweetly. A king once put a question to the noblemen sitting in his *darbar* (court): What is the sweetest thing on earth? The king firmly said to his courtiers, "I do not want a text book answer. Your answer should come from your own experience." One of the courtiers seated there answered, "The sweetest thing in this world is honey." The second courtier said, "The sweetest thing is unrefined sugar-candy." The third person answered, "The sweetest thing is sugar." The fourth answer was, "*Malai barfi*." The

fifth was, "Ice-cream." And many such answers were given.

The king then posed a second question, "Which is the most bitter thing in the world?" "Poison," replied someone. The king immediately chided the person, "Have you ever taken poison? Have you ever experienced its effect? I said, the answers should come from your own experience. A person who has taken poison, cannot be alive."

There were many answers such as *karela* (bitter gourd), copper sulphate and so on. At last, one man gave an answer which pleased the king greatly. He said, "Your majesty, the answer to both your questions is one and the same: it is the human tongue. Man can have a sweet tongue or a sharp tongue. A sweet tongue is soothing; it is like a balm. It is the sweetest thing. A sharp tongue hurts and harms. It is the bitterest thing in the world."

The king was very pleased with the answer and rewarded the man for the same.

A woman met me. She was crying bitterly. I asked her, "Sister, why are you crying?" She replied, "So and so talked to me rudely. I am deeply hurt. Nothing can assuage that hurt."

"Why not?" I consoled her. "The tongue which has spoken harsh words, can also speak sweet, healing words."

The same tongue can speak harsh words and hurt you, the same tongue can speak sweet, soothing words

to heal you. That is why, the sweetest and the bitterest, the gentlest and harshest thing in this world is 'the tongue'.

Time and again, the volunteers at the Sadhu Vaswani Mission serve *gulab jamuns*, *jilebi* and ice cream, so that all of us may develop a 'sweet' tongue.

(3)

My dear brothers and sisters, Guru Nanak Dev has said, "Until your speech is sweet, you cannot enter God's domain. The angels at Heaven's gate will ask, Have you learnt the art of speaking sweetly?" If your answer is yes, then you would be allowed to enter Heaven. If your answer is no, or yes and no – sometimes yes, I speak gently, but sometimes I raise my voice, – then too, you would be stopped. The angels will not allow you in, saying, "Firstly let us calculate your worth in terms of good deeds and then we shall decide on your entry."

My dear brothers and sisters, take this one thought with you today. Speak sweetly, speak the Language of affection and love.

Sant Kabir has shown us the easiest way of filling your life to the brim with happiness and bliss. It is to adopt three basic ideals of life, speak sweetly; be humble, follow the little way; and perform acts of charity with your own hands.

Once, Gautama Buddha was sitting among his disciples and devotees. Someone in the crowd said,



“Lord, many of us have come from afar to hear you. Pray, give us a teaching which we can carry with ourselves as we leave.”

The Buddha picked up a ripe mango placed beside him, showed it to everyone present and then put it back in its place.

A few minutes passed. The devotees could not understand what this gesture meant. Once again, they requested him for a message, a teaching which they could imbibe in their daily life. “Pray, give us a teaching, which we can inscribe on our hearts,” they begged the Master.

The Buddha repeated his gesture. Once again, he picked up the mango, showed it to all and then kept it back in its place.

This was repeated for the third time. The fourth time, the crowd asked for a message, the Buddha said to them, “My dear ones, three times did I give you my teaching, but you did not understand it.”

People were surprised. Bewildered, they asked: “Master, pray tell us what is your message to us?”

“I showed you the mango,” replied the Enlightened One. “The mango is sweet. You too, must be like a mango, sweet to the core. That is my message to you.”

Speak sweetly to all. Speak words which will erase the ego. Speak words which will soothe others and will bring serenity to you.

My dear brothers and sisters, let us endeavour to be soft and gentle with others and pray to God, to give us the strength, the will and the wisdom to be gentle and good natured, always. If we pick up this one ideal, our lives will be worthwhile, and it will create harmony and peace wherever we go.

Confucius was a great Chinese philosopher of ancient times. During the last days of his earthly journey he was bed ridden. He was surrounded by his many disciples. He wanted to give them the 'last' teaching. Opening his mouth wide, he told them, "Look inside and tell me, what do you see?"

The disciples looked into the mouth and said, "Master, we can only see your tongue." On hearing this, Confucius asked them, "What is in your mouth?"

The disciples replied, "In our mouth, there is a tongue and there are also teeth."

Confucius then said to them, "The teeth are strong and firm. But the tongue is soft and fleshy. We are born with our tongue, which is formed before the teeth; even a newborn infant has a tongue. Teeth come afterwards, but fall off with growing years. But the tongue remains with man throughout his life. This is because the tongue is soft and fleshy. It lasts a lifetime due to its softness. Therefore, be soft spoken, be sweet spoken."

Speak softly and sweetly. Be gentle in your disposition. Remember, Lord Krishna Himself resides within you – and within everyone with whom you

Speak. The same words can be said in a harsh, high pitched voice and the same words can be spoken in a soft, gentle tone.

(4)

There is a saying, that truth triumphs. *Satyameva jayate*. Victory belongs to Truth. Hence, some people argue, that if they are speaking the Truth, they can speak it loudly, firmly, and authoritatively. But, the fact is that truth can be best conveyed in a soft, gentle way. Truth is humble! Therefore while speaking the truth we should never be arrogant.

Guru Arjun Dev, in Sri *Sukhmani Sahib*, says, "The true *Brahmagnani* is one who lives in humility." A true *Brahmagnani* is pure as a lily and humble as ashes and dust. He immerses himself in austerity and lives a life of simplicity.

It is said of Leo Tolstoy, the great Russian writer, that when he realised the truth of his being, he renounced his vast material wealth, high social status and power. He went and lived among the poor peasants of Russia.

Think of Sri Krishna, the Lord of the universe. He humbled himself to become the charioteer of his dear, devoted disciple, *Arjuna*. Maha Vishnu became Partha Sarathi to demonstrate to us his *saushilya* – the quality of gentle, loving kindness that we must all emulate.

Mahatma Gandhi's poverty and austere lifestyle is a legend of our times. Clad in his loincloth and *angavastra*, he conquered a million hearts, as well as the might of the British Empire.

If you wish to be great and noble like these illustrious personalities, then you should be humble. So humble, that people should ask you, "Who is your Guru?" Looking at your personality, people will be drawn to your Guru.

I would like to draw your attention to the times when telephones were uncommon and could only be connected through the telephone exchange. You could not dial any number directly in those days. The telephone operator at the 'exchange' would ask for the number and then key it into her 'board' and make the connection for the call. Once, a man asked the telephone operator to give him a particular number. By mistake, the telephone operator connected him to a wrong number. The man very gently told the telephone operator that she had wrongly connected him. At this, the telephone operator apologised to him and said she would dial the right number for him. As luck would have it, she connected him to the wrong number the second time. The third time, this man cautioned the telephone operator and requested her to be more attentive while dialing the number. His call was urgent. But for the third time also, she gave him a wrong connection!

This happened seven times. When the caller made the request for the eighth time, the telephone operator



was surprised and touched. Actually, she was told that her father had a sudden heart attack and was shifted to the ICCU of a Heart Institute. She was therefore unable to concentrate on her work and every time she dialed the number it went to the wrong party.

The telephone operator said to the gentleman, "Sir, you have great patience. You talk so courteously and gently, even after I have given you the wrong number seven times. How is it that you are so kind?"

The gentleman replied, "I have received this gift of patience from my Guru."

"Who is your Guru?"

"Would you like to attend his *satsang* and listen to his discourses?" he asked her.

"Certainly," she replied, "I would love to hear the sacred words of a Guru, whose disciple is so gentle, that he forgave my mistakes seven times and retained his soft and sweet voice for the eighth time! If the disciple is so sweet and gentle, his Guru must be truly great."

Speak softly. Be humble. Be pure.

No matter what your status in life; no matter how rich and powerful you are; no matter how influential your connections may be, be humble. Treat all those below you with kindness and gentleness.

Why should we be humble? Because Lord Krishna resides within everyone of us. He is richer than us, He is more powerful than us. He is more intelligent

and wise than we are. He is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient. Lord Krishna's beauty, art, intellect, knowledge and ability are supreme. We are like a speck of dust, insignificant before His power and magnificence. And yet, He comes to live in the humble abode of our heart. Should this not teach us to be humble?

King James the Second, was a powerful monarch of England. Once, some of his important papers were missing. He searched for them high and low, but could not find them. Calling his personal attendant, he asked him if he had seen the papers. The personal attendant replied, "Your Majesty, I do not know any thing about the papers. I have not seen them at all!" Hearing this, the King flew into a rage. He slapped the attendant hard, and said, "How dare you call yourself my attendant, if you cannot keep track of my personal papers?"

The poor attendant was abashed. He bowed low before the king and said, "My Lord, please forgive me." The servant was in no way responsible for the loss of the papers. But he knew that the king had the authority to punish him.

Three days later, the King's minister brought some documents for the king's perusal. The King opened the file and was surprised to find those needed papers inside. The King recalled that he had sent these very documents to his minister with the instruction, to read them carefully and make a gist of the same, for his perusal. The King also recalled, how furious he

had been with his personal attendant for apparently misplacing the documents. Immediately, he called his attendant and in the very presence of his minister, the King asked the attendant for forgiveness.

The attendant was taken aback. "Your Majesty," he exclaimed, "you are the monarch of this country. I am but a humble servant. Who am I to forgive you?"

"No, no," the King insisted, "unless you forgive me for my harsh behaviour, God will not pardon me. You were innocent. Even if you had made the mistake, I had no right to slap you." The King somehow convinced the attendant to say, "Your Majesty, I forgive you."

James, the Second, was truly a noble King. He practiced humility in daily life.

Once I visited a family. The *dhobi* (washerman) had brought in clothes and was meekly standing in a corner. Nearby was an empty chair. I said to the *dhobi*, "Why don't you sit down on that chair." Hearing this, the head of the household felt disturbed. He said, "We must keep them in their place. By showing them undue kindness, we will only spoil them." Such is our false ego and pride.

Be sweet, be humble and be kind. Everyday, give something in charity. The day you have not done a good deed is a day wasted. The question often asked is, "What if I don't have anything to give?" My answer to this question is, "If you don't have anything to


give, at least give everyone a sweet smile.” A ‘smile’ is something that remains with us, even after we have beamed it to someone. No one can snatch it away from us. It is a precious asset, that remains with us, even when we have given it away. It brings us joy and spreads smiles all around us.

May I suggest something to you? Before retiring for the night, recount the events of the day. Ponder over them. Ask yourself: Have I done a good deed today? Have I helped someone in need? Has my day been useful or has it been wasted?

Normally, we put off such activities with the thought, half my life is over, anyway; now, what difference does it make? But let me tell you, it is never too late. Make the most of the remaining years of your life.

Let your daily life bear witness to the following principles:

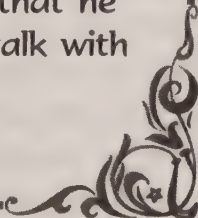
- (1) I shall rejoice in everything that comes to me as the Will of God;
- (2) I shall stop complaining and start thanking;
- (3) I shall never find fault with anyone;
- (4) I shall speak sweetly, softly, gently;
- (5) I shall walk the little way – the way of humility and love;
- (6) I shall share the good things of life with those in need!



Man is a marvel of
God's creation.

The qualities of his
mind and heart are
unique.

What makes man truly
marvellous is that he
can walk and talk with
God!



What Is True Wisdom?

(1)

Many friends who have attempted to take their first steps on the ladder of *abhyasa*, tell me that when they sit to meditate, their minds begin to wander – and all kinds of unwanted thoughts bother them. Long forgotten incidents crawl in, causing turmoil and turbulence in the mind.

I sympathise with them. Their problem is not uncommon, for the human mind is volatile. It runs from one event to another; it gallops like a race horse and with the speed of lightening it travels far away, moving forward and backward, for time is not a restriction on the power of the mind. Thoughts of the past and future, events long forgotten, disturb us when we sit in meditation. Physically inactive, the mind wanders even more, as we attempt to still the thoughts. A restless mind is disturbing. Negative thoughts appear and persist, draining our emotional energy and causing a turmoil within.

Those who love God, attempt to overcome this turmoil by fixing their minds on the Lord. They think

only of God, even while meditating. It is in the nature of thoughts to run to the things you love. If you love God, then sure enough, your thought energy will be focused on the object of your love; and you will experience the serenity of meditation.

Many people persist in the fallacy that if we sit in *padmasan* and meditate, our consciousness will automatically 'climb' to a higher level. I am afraid that doesn't happen automatically. Your consciousness cannot rise unless and until your mind is integrated. Higher consciousness arises out of love for the Lord. That love has to be deep and intense. It has to be a longing, an intense yearning arising from the depths within. Fortunate is that devotee, who sheds tears of longing – whose urge is so intense, that his heart swells up and his eyes glisten with unbidden tears. He weeps, he cries from the depths of his heart. Such yearning, such longing can only come when the mind is integrated and still.

We are separated from the Source: we are separated from our Beloved, from our real Father and real Mother. We are as yet unaware of the pain and the sorrow of this separation. Once we become aware of this pain, tears will naturally flow and we will cry out from the depths of our being, for our Beloved!

(2)

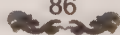
The spiritual path is not the primrose path of comfortable, easy progress. Wise men have spoken

to us of the 'steep and thorny way' to heaven. It is a journey that requires intense effort; it is the path of a bruised and a wounded heart. This path cares not for those with parched dry eyes; it only sees the flowing tears of a smitten heart.

Why should the tears flow, you might ask me. We lack nothing here; we want nothing; what is there to weep for? Living amidst the luxuries of life, we often do not feel the need for anything, until we realise that this world cannot give us what we truly need. Then the feeling of uneasiness stirs. The troubled spirit begins to feel the longing for liberation. Fortunate is the one whose heart longs for the love of the Lord. Such a devotee is rare, for he realises that these luxuries of life are trinkets and the joy they give is ephemeral and superficial. Within his heart is a wound festered by separation from the Beloved. Such a devotee cries out, even as he sits in meditation: "O Lord, where should I search for You? Where will I find You? I need nothing; I need Thee, and only Thee." This is his prayer while he sits in meditation.

Have you ever cried for the Lord, while in deep meditation? Not from the surface of your heart, but out of the very depths of your being?

In order to still the mind and integrate it, begin your meditation by offering a prayer or by singing a devotional song. The prayer or the hymn '*bhajan*' must spring from the lotus of your heart. In that emotional surge, your mind will find a focus. It will integrate.



Tears are necessary on this path of love. For tears cleanse the heart and purify the mind. Our hearts are filled with a great deal of negativity and evil. As the heart gets purified, the mind becomes restful.

A question was once put to Rabia, a *Sufi* saint. Do you first worship God, and then see Him or do you first experience Him and then begin your worship?

Rabia's reply was, "When my tears flow endlessly, when my heart is overwhelmed with emotion, I experience the Grace of God. I know then that it is the time to worship God. It is then that I find God standing in front of me face to face."

Saints and sages have said, that if you want to follow the path of love, you must shed tears of longing; you must experience the agony of separation. Guru Gobind Singh in his sacred verse, says:

*First be prepared to die
And renounce the desire to live.*

As I said to you, the path to liberation, the path to God is strewn with the thorns of sorrow. It is not for those who take life easy; it is not for those who prefer shortcuts and quick deals.

This deal, this bargain with God is very costly. You have to sacrifice your life; you have to trade your all for it.

(3)

Sadhu Vaswani, my Beloved Master has shown us an easy path. He realised that it is very difficult

for a layman to 'sacrifice his all' for the love of God. So he gave us an easy way – the way of tears; the way of longing; the way of weeping our hearts out, so that we may meet the Beloved. Invoke God to shower the grace of tears, tears of yearning and longing within you. Cry out to Him, "O Lord, inflict wounds of sorrow on my heart; let my eyes overflow with tears of love and longing for You."

Let us pray to God today. Let us appeal to Him, let us beg of Him, to fill our hearts with that sorrow and fill our eyes with streams of tears.

There are two kinds of men in this world: Those who are worldly and those who are unworldly, that is, spiritual. Each kind has its own 'wine' of intoxication. The spiritual kind gets high on *naam kirtan*. He is obsessed and passionate about *satsang*.

May the intoxication of the Name Divine, says "Nanak, abide with me by day and by night...."

The spiritual man is God-intoxicated, *Naam*-intoxicated. It is a different kind of *intoxication* altogether. On the other hand, the worldly man is obsessed with accumulating wealth. He gets intoxicated by the pleasures of life. In his pleasure pursuit, he forgets about the other important aspects of life. He begins to ignore his relationships; his family and his social set-up. So much so that he even neglects his wife. The wife waits for her husband to return home, but the husband is busy making money. His passion for money keeps him away. It isolates him from his near and dear ones.

It is said that if you make a whey of boiled rice and give it to a drunken man, he will become all right. What kind of beverage should be given to a worldly man who is drunk on the pleasures of life? The answer is:

Give him the company of the saints of God, the company of a holy man.

Holy men, men of God have no fascination for the worldly pleasures. For them, the true pleasure is the ecstasy of being in super consciousness. For them, this world is but a dream. And fame, name, social status, wealth and ambition, have no meaning. Every saint wishes to impart two lessons to his devotees. One *viveka*, and two *vairagya*.

What is *viveka* (conscience)?

It is the power of discrimination, discrimination between the real and the unreal. Every saint tries to inculcate in his devotees the eternal teaching, what is around us, is unreal. It is an illusion. The Truth is something different. The unreal is limited and temporary. But the Truth is eternal. Do not run after the pleasures of the earth. These are mere shadows. They are unreal and elusive. The reality is different. The essence, the Truth is *naam*! Recite the Name of God. For God is Truth, and all else is an illusion!

What is *vairagya* (renunciation)?

Vairagya arises out of the knowledge and the wisdom of knowing that whatever is around is an illusion. It is a mirage. This awareness will make you

realise the futility of running after material wealth and sensual pleasures. It will make you aware of the truth of the Absolute Reality.

Vairagya is the Spirit of dispassion, detachment. It comes upon us when we are disillusioned with the world.

It is when you renounce your worldly pursuits and stop chasing its shadows, that you will be able to create a space within. And when you feel the vacancy, the emptiness in the heart within, there will arise the yearning, the intense longing for the Lord! This thirst, this hunger will grow till streams of tears flow from your eyes.

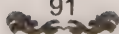
The true devotee imbibes these two ideals, *viveka* and *vairagya* and therefore his eyes are always touched with tears.

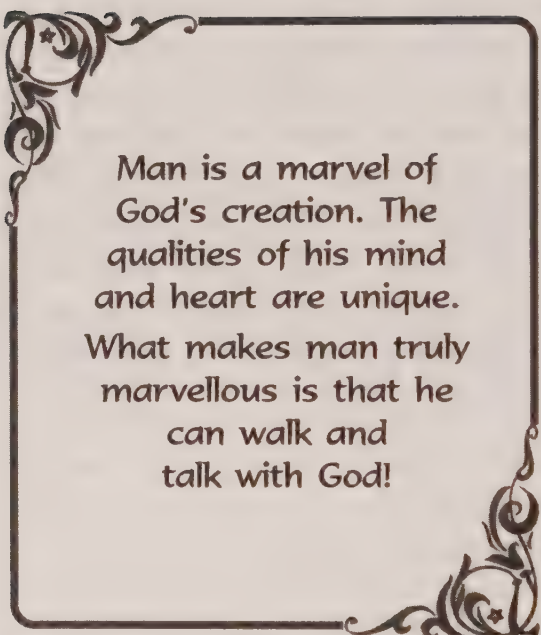
Sadhu Vaswani once told us about a devotee, who was an ordinary man — simple and humble. He wasn't a learned scholar. He was often seen in tattered clothes. Gurudev Sadhu Vaswani first saw him in a temple. He was sitting in a corner, staring at the palms of his hand and weeping silently. For nearly half an hour, the Master saw that he was crying. Sadhu Vaswani, then asked him: "You were looking at the palms of your hand and crying. What is the reason?"

The devotee showed the picture of Sri Krishna in his hands and said, "Looking at my Beloved, I was overwhelmed. Tears flowed from my eyes. I looked at Him: He looked at me."

God is not found on high mountain tops, nor is He in deep forests; God is not to be reached in temples or pilgrimages. God is where you are. He is within you. He is with you – close your eyes, look within and He is there! We have to follow just one discipline—that is to search for Him within, become aware of His presence within us and commune with Him. He is not from you afar. He is very near, nearer than anything around us. Go and sit in silence, try to feel Him, talk to Him, share your sorrows, your yearnings; open your heart to Him and tell Him of your intense thirst. The tears of longing will fall and cleanse you, purify you from within. You will be blessed! Sure enough you will hear Him, and experience Him.

Tears of love for God are the best way to purify the soul. In that purity of soul you will see the Light burning, the Eternal light. And you will be blessed, blessed for ever more!





Man is a marvel of
God's creation. The
qualities of his mind
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What makes man truly
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The Way of The Sufis

(1)

According to Sufi Saints, every seeker on the spiritual path, every aspirant has to go through four stages of spiritual growth.

The first stage is known as *Shariyat*. This is the preliminary stage of conforming to the normative structure of religion. Every religion prescribes rites and rituals which pertain to aspects of everyday living – mode of worship, time of worship and ceremonies regarding birth, marriage and death. For instance, according to Hindu religion, on the sixth day of the birth of a child, its horoscope is cast. Many Hindus also religiously follow the *Janaoi*, or the sacred thread ceremony. Every Hindu marriage includes certain important rituals like the *saat pheras*. These rituals have their own value, for they are vital external expressions of religion.

Although most people perform the rituals with faith, they are at times exploited by others. There are many who profess to be high priests and who are

revered by the society because they perform 'yagna' and are experts at reading 'katha', etc. These priests are very rigid about the way the religious ceremonies are performed. They profess to be religious, but their hearts are still filled with darkness. True spirituality has eluded them. They are imprisoned by desires; their mind is possessed by the evil of *kaama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha* and *ahankara* (lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego). They may officiate at our rituals, but it is doubtful whether they are themselves evolved souls.

As I said, this is the first stage in man's spiritual growth. During this stage, men believe in the rites and rituals prescribed by the religious text books. They go to great lengths to observe the 'externalities' of religion but fail to go beyond these rituals to their inner self which is the seat of spirituality. Those brought up in this tradition feel guilty when they miss out on their routine of worship. 'God will be angry', 'God will punish me', is their reaction. How can God ever be angry? How can He punish you for not observing something that is external and superficial? God is all love, God is all kindness.

Once a sister came to me crying, "My husband has had a heart attack. I know we are being punished because I did not perform the annual *Satyanarayan pooja* last year. I wish you would teach me how to appease God, who, must be angry with me."

I have said this to you before, and I will say it to you again: God is too loving to punish, He is also too

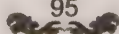


wise to make a mistake. How unholy, how impious we are to imagine that He takes pleasure in punishing us! God does not care for external things like loud recitation of scriptures, elaborate *poojas* or expensive ornaments and silks to adorn His picture. If at all there is anything He wants from us, it is Love – true, unconditional love.

(2)

The second stage is called *Tariqat*. This is the stage of *sadhana*. An aspirant who steps into this stage, binds himself to certain ideals. His life is devoted to those ideals and his most valuable time is spent on the discipline of putting those ideals into practice. We get a glimpse of this type of discipline in Patanjali's Yoga Sutra. As many of you may know, Maharishi Patanjali prescribes certain *yamas* and *niyamas* – some do's and don'ts. One of the very first of these is the injunction to keep the mind pure. Banish evil and negative thoughts from your thinking process. Do not think evil of anyone, do not covet others' possessions, do not desire another person's wife, and so on.

Gurudev Sadhu Vaswani used to tell us: When you walk, your eyes should be fixed on your toes. Eyes play a very crucial role in our day to day existence. Eyes are the windows of our soul. Eyes reflect the emotions of the heart and the thoughts in the mind. Hence, we should close our eyes to anything which is evil, ugly and undesirable.



A great deal of energy is lost in talking, hearing and seeing undesirable things. Speech, sight and hearing should be guarded carefully. There is a veritable storehouse of energy within each one of us. But we do not make proper use of it. Saints and sages have shown us the way, but we fail to follow their example.

A sister one day asked me, "I find it impossible to shut my ears against external noises when I meditate. Can you help me?" A great sage has taught us: When your senses are drawn within, then you will not hear any noise even in the din of a busy market-place, because your mind is focused on the Lord. In deep meditation, you are not aware of the world around you.

There are many Gurus today, who do not attach much value to *yamas* and *niyams*. They do not advise their followers to adhere to any specific spiritual values, or practise any disciplines. In fact, they advocate that all that is required for an ideal life is to sit in '*padmasan*' posture and meditate— and, they assure you, that you will reach the Ultimate! May I ask you, "Can one sit in meditation if one is still attached to worldly affairs, and is a slave to sensual desires, evil thoughts and negative emotions?" According to my humble submission, it is not possible. Because your thoughts will always run to material things. Your mind will wander away in all directions. Guru Arjan tells us that the mind wanders in all the ten directions. No matter if you close your eyes and ears, if the mind is



not controlled, it will run miles and miles in many directions. That is the nature of the mind. It is fickle. Unless you discipline the mind by purifying it, you will not be able to sit in meditation and purification of the mind comes with the grace of the Guru.

You should take up an ideal and make it part of your life. When you feel you have truly imbibed the ideal in deeds of daily living, choose another ideal. And then another, and yet another. In this way you will progress on the spiritual path.

An aspirant in the first stage sticks to externalities. He reads scriptures and worships at shrines. He arrives at the second stage: he realises that his mind is impure and he prays, "O Lord! Forgive me. Purify me. Cleanse me of impurities." It is at such times that he realises how his life has been wasted by the mistakes that he has made, the wrong deeds he has done and the sins he has committed. It is then that the aspirant seeks the grace of God! "Dear God, please give me the strength, so that I am able to battle with the impurities of the mind. I need Thee, O Lord, for the world is full of evil and I am hopelessly stuck in it. O Lord, Your grace alone can pull me out of it."

When the mind is purified, the aspirant realises, that he is not this body of five elements, he is a soul which is eternal and which cannot be destroyed. This realisation comes only when one is fortunate to get guidance from a saint or a holy man. That is when he attains *samadhrishti*. Now he begins to see the One in all. He begins to love nature. He learns to have

reverence for trees, plants, animals and insects. He begins to love all creation, all humanity. He cares for every individual around him. His heart flows in compassion to every being that breathes the breath of life. He realises his duty towards the Universe and discovers the purpose and meaning of his ultimate destiny. This is the stage of selfless love and service which truly is worship of God.

(3)

The third stage is called by the Sufis *M'arfat* which, when literally translated, means 'care of' (c/o). During this stage, the aspirant needs a Guru to guide him, for this is the stage of self-knowledge. It is a difficult stage.

Once, there lived a king who ruled a small state. One day dacoits ransacked his palace, kidnapped his one year old son and disappeared with the booty and the child. The king was heart broken. He tried to get back his son but in vain. Years passed, one day, while he was hunting in a forest, the king came across a young and handsome boy. The king was drawn to him. The king enquired about the boy and his whereabouts. He spoke to the boy. The boy, unaware that he was in the presence of a king, innocently revealed the truth about himself. "I am the son of the Chief of the dacoits of this region," he said, "I am eighteen years of age: my father has grown old and has nominated me as the leader of the gang."

The king calculated the age of his kidnapped son and felt that this boy could be his own son. He asked the boy to take him to his father. The king then found out about the boy's background. Neither the boy, nor the father, who was the Chief of the dacoits, realised that they were in the presence of the king. The Chief, who had grown old and weary, broke down in tears. "My end is near, hence I want to tell you the truth. The young boy is actually a prince. Seventeen years back, I had kidnapped him from the palace." Hearing this, the king started to weep. Tears rolled down his cheeks. "I am the unfortunate father from whom you stole this boy," he said. "This young man is my own son. If you would kindly permit, then I would take him away to my kingdom. You love the boy as your own, don't you? Would you not agree that it is better for him to be a king, than to be the leader of a gang of dacoits?"

The boy, who, just a few moments ago, thought that he was a 'Chief' of outlaws, now finds himself to be a prince. He has come to know his true self.

When one knows the true answer to the question, 'Who am I?' then his life becomes different altogether. It is difficult to describe in words this experience of 'Awareness'. The 'small self', the ego drops down. Man realises that he is the *Atman*. He is divine. He who crosses this third stage, has conquered himself. For him this world is an illusion. He has reached the shore of reality. As an inspired poet once said, "Death does not touch him who has died before his death."

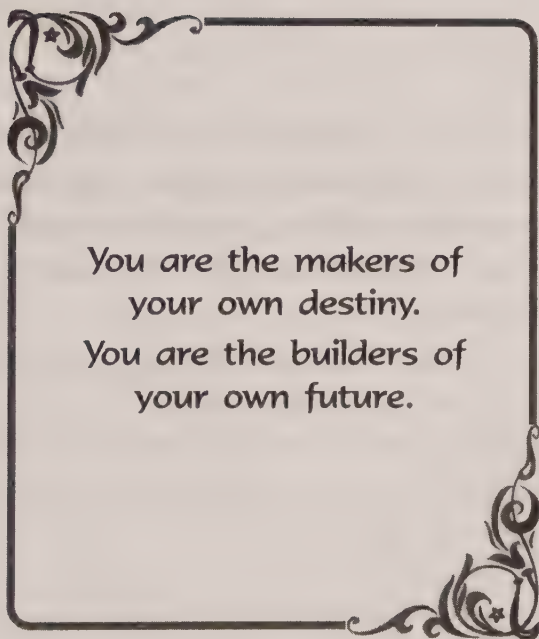
The fourth stage is called *Haqiqat*. This is the stage of the Ultimate Truth, that which transcends material-illusions. In this stage, man is reborn. He is made anew. In this new birth, man's every perspective changes; he begins to see with different eyes, he hears new and different sounds. He then serves the poor and the needy with Love Divine. This is also the stage of identification with the Supreme. At this stage, the mystics go into ecstasy and utter words, which ordinary mortals cannot understand.

Mansoor, was a Sufi Saint. One day, in his madness, he asserted, "*Anhal Haq*" – "I am the Truth! I am God!" He was skinned alive. Yet, this true man of God stuck to his words, "*Anhal Haq*" – I am God. "All this torture touches my body," he exclaimed. "But my body has been dead for long. You will not be able to destroy me. *Anhal Haq!* I am That!"

Often we quote our scriptures and proclaim, "*Aham Brahmasmi*" – I am Brahman. It is true, 'I am That', but we do not have the right to claim such a thing, unless and until we have truly realised the truth, and experienced oneness with God.

This is the final stage of spiritual evolution, the stage of experiencing oneness with God.

It is men like Mansoor, who alone have the right to say, "I am That" or *Aham Brahmasmi*.



You are the makers of
your own destiny.
You are the builders of
your own future.

U Can Make The Impossible, Possible

(1)

Gurudev Sadhu Vaswani would often tell us that we are all born with an innate, supreme *shakti*. “You are not the weakling you take yourself to be,” he said to us, “within you lies a tremendous power, a hidden *shakti*.”

Many of us are unaware of this power within. If only we can tap this hidden *shakti*, we can conquer all difficulties, surmount all obstacles, face the turbulence of day to day living and sail through the stormy waters of life.

The question is: How can we awaken this *shakti*? How may we go deep within the self and touch the source of this *shakti*?

Our ancient *rishis* have taught us about this tremendous power or *shakti* within us. Once this *shakti* is awakened, there is nothing that we cannot

achieve. All we need to do is to tap our own spiritual strength.

During the troubled days following the traumatic partition of India, Sadhu Vaswani urged the refugees from Sind to be strong within. He exhorted them to be self sufficient and refrain from begging for government help. Again and again, he repeated those magic words which became a *mantra* of positive thinking for all of us: "Within you lies a hidden *shakti*; awaken that *shakti* and all will be well with you." I remember, too, his unforgettable call to the shattered community, "Believe and achieve."

There is an interesting incident told to us in the life of Prophet Mohammad. One day a starving man goes to him and begs for some food. The man says he has not eaten a morsel for three days; he begs for food so that he can feed his wife and children. The Prophet does not give him food, but offers him an axe instead; and he tells the man, "Go to the forest, chop the trees with this axe, collect the wood, sell it and with the money buy food for your family. With God's grace you will be able to take care of your family." The man's life is transformed; he starts off as a woodcutter and, in due course, becomes a prosperous man.

There is a story in the Mahabharata which emphasises the same ideal. There lived a farmer who had a large field next to a pond. The pond, when it was full, would often overflow into the field and swamp it. The farmer realised that if he had to cultivate the field he would have to get it drained, and build an



embankment around the pond so that the waters would not enter the field.

One day the farmer called his youngest son and instructed him to drain the water and start building the embankment. There were several fish living in the waters of the field, for the field itself resembled a lake. The tiniest fish in the lake heard this conversation between the farmer and his son and duly reported the same to the wise old fish who was their leader. "Surely it is time for us to leave this field now," said the tiny fish, anxiously.

"We don't have to bother about this," said the wise old fish. "The youngest son is utterly lazy and he will not lift a finger to obey his father."

The words proved to be true. The next evening, the farmer came to inspect the field and found that nothing had been done. He called his second son and said to him, "You are more mature and responsible than your younger brother. Drain this field of all water and let us secure the land with an embankment. The land is fertile and we can reap a rich harvest."

The tiny fish again happened to hear the conversation and reported the same to the leader. Once again, the leader said to him, "Have no fear. The second son is even lazier than his brother."

The next evening the tiny fish heard the farmer repeating the same request to his eldest son. "Your brothers are foolish and lazy," the father said to him

"I hope you, my first born, will act with more responsibility."

This was duly reported to the leader, who only said, "I know the eldest son. He is the laziest of them all. We can continue to stay here in safety."

The following evening the farmer came to inspect his field. He saw that the field had not been drained. "It was foolish of me to expect my sons to do this work," he said to himself. "I shall do it myself tomorrow."

When the leader of the fish heard this, he advised his companions to leave the field, "When a man realises that he has to depend on himself, he is sure to get his work done. Therefore, it is time for us to leave our home immediately."

Self-help is the best help. Be self reliant, be self dependent, be spiritually strong. Develop spiritual strength and you will see miracles happen in your life.

We are told that when Napoleon invaded Austria, his army had to cross a narrow bridge to enter the enemy territory. His troops became nervous, because the enemy had already begun firing on the other side. Napoleon's Commander too was reluctant to proceed, for he too feared that they would be caught in the line of fire. Now, Napoleon was a man of inner strength. Sensing the indecisiveness of his Commander, he snatched the flag from the Commander and started running on the narrow bridge, shouting, "Come on men, save your leader!"

On hearing this battle cry, the troops were spurred to action and followed their leader. They safely crossed the narrow bridge and conquered the region. The moral of the story? Napoleon depended on himself to lead his troops successfully.

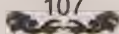
Very often in our daily life, we depend on other people; we expect others to do things for us, and we feel let down when the work is left undone, or is not done to our satisfaction. That should teach us to be self reliant. We should not expect others to help us with our own work. We should be independent and accomplish the work with confidence. We must learn the valuable lesson that self help is the best help. This lesson of self dependence is one that each one of us should put into practice. We all have to rely on our own spiritual strength.

The virtue of self-reliance should be inculcated in the children from a very early age. They must be taught to attend to their own small routine chores such as polishing shoes, folding clothes and making their beds. Children should be encouraged to take care of these little things, which they can surely manage on their own. There are some parents who pamper their children by deliberately keeping them away from the smallest physical jobs. This only thwarts the growth of children, for they will grow up to be dependent on others. Inner strength comes from being self reliant. It is our duty to make our children grow in spiritual strength. This is the best legacy that we can give them.

As a child, I once returned home from school very tired. I asked a servant to fetch me a glass of water. My father, who was standing nearby, heard me. He came to me and asked me, "Have you hurt your hands and feet? Can you walk or no?" Surprised, I told him that I was perfectly fine. I still remember my father's gentle rebuke, "If you are in perfect health, then why can't you fetch your own glass of water?" I felt ashamed of myself. Since that day, I prefer to do my own chores.

Many parents these days desire that their children should be dependent on them. It gives them a sense of authority. Once I visited a home, where the lady of the house had made her husband and her son totally dependent on her. Her son, who was eighteen years old, was waiting for his mother to hand him the clothes he should wear that day. As for the father, he could not even help himself to the food laid before him on the table. His wife had to butter his toast and pour his tea out for him. The lady of the house said to us very proudly, that the father and the son were completely dependent on her. I was surprised, indeed. What was she proud of? She had actually handicapped them!

There is an institute by the name of G.D. Naidu Institute of Technology at Coimbatore. On one of its walls are written the following words, "One should not depend on one's parents after the age of 18. One should stand on one's own feet." The founder of the Institute, Shri G.D. Naidu, was a self made man,



who became one of the greatest entrepreneurs of South India, through his own pioneering efforts.

(2)

What is the meaning of self-dependence? A man has two selves. The one that is obvious to us, the one that generates lust, greed, anger and attachment is the ego. This is the self which evokes desires. But man has another self which is great, pure and vast. In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna tells Arjuna, "O Arjuna, I reside in every heart." In each one of us is the Divine Spirit. We are so surrounded by *maya* that we fail to realise this Divinity within us. That is why our *Rishis* urge us to know ourselves well. For, we will experience this Divinity only when we rid ourselves of our ego.

In the last century, there lived a famous singer and musician by the name of Enrico Caruso. He was an institution by himself. He was also a miracle man. His loud, sonorous voice could shatter a glass. Yet this man had to face many challenges in life. When he first began to sing his compositions, he incurred the wrath of the audience. They were so angry that they chased him with sticks and stones and drove him off the stage and then out of the town. But Caruso did not accept defeat. In his room, behind closed doors, he began to practise his music rigorously. He would say to himself again and again, "You little me, get out of me. You big me, get into me." In this



way, he awakened his inner *shakti*. This was the secret of his success.

If you want to be successful in life, you must awaken the power within. If at all you must depend on someone then choose to depend on God. Surrender the thread of your life into His safe hands and you will find that you lack nothing. We can solve all our problems, surmount all our difficulties with the help of God. We should cultivate a loving relationship with God. This will kindle the hidden *shakti* within us.

Awaken the spiritual power within you! This is the true meaning of self-reliance.

There is an interesting episode narrated in *Bhagwat Purana*. Long ago there lived a King. A pandit used to go to him every day and read the *Bhagawat* aloud. After every chapter, the pandit would read the closing message, which said, "He who religiously reads the *Bhagwat* or hears it, will himself witness the Light and will achieve *mukti*, liberation from the cycle of birth and death."

After a few months of daily reading, when the pandit had completed reading the whole *Purana*, the King asked him a question, "Tell me, have I witnessed the Light? Have I reached the stage where I will be released from the cycle of birth and death?" To this, the pandit replied, "That is the question which you alone can answer for yourself, your Majesty!"

The King was not happy with this reply. "You have deceived me," he accused the pandit. "Every



evening, I have been hearing the *Bhagwat Purana*. At the end of each chapter you have said to me that he who hears the *Bhagwata Purana* will attain *mukti* and witness the Light. Now, you have to prove what you have been reading. I give you one week's time to prove that I have attained liberation. If you fail to prove this, I will send you to the gallows."

The pandit was taken aback. He had expected praise and reward from the King. Instead he had received a threat of death! Depressed, he returned home. Six days passed by, but he could not find any solution to the problem. How was he to prove to the King that after listening to the *Bhagwat Purana*, a man achieves *mukti*? The pandit became despondent.

His seven year old daughter, seeing her father's anguished face, asked him, "Baba, why are your eyes glistening with unbidden tears? What is your problem?"

The pandit opened out his heart to his child. The girl heard him out. Then she said very innocently, "Is that what worries you? Don't cry, for I will come with you to the King's *darbar*, and I will explain the situation to the King and convince him."

On the following day, the girl accompanied the pandit to the King's palace. On entering the *darbar* she ran to one of the ornamental pillars and embraced it. And then, she began to cry at the top of her voice, "O please, please, will someone release me from the grip of this pillar? This pillar is holding me." The King witnessed the scene from his throne

and thought that the girl was indeed stupid. Who has brought this foolish child to the court, he wondered. Surely, she was mad. For she herself was clinging to the pillar and shouting to others to come and rescue her!

Aloud, he said to her, "Oh foolish girl, just leave that pillar." The girl cried still louder, "O please, please, separate me from this pillar. Come someone, I have to go back home, but the pillar will not let me go. Have mercy on me and please release me from the clutch of this pillar."

Now the King was really angry. "Who is this stupid girl?" he thundered. "Who has brought her here to my palace? I shall punish them both severely."

On hearing this, the girl left the pillar with a smile. She humbly bowed before the King and said to him, "Your Majesty, you too are holding on to the pillar of your ego. You are unnecessarily blaming my father for not having achieved *mukti*. Leave the ego and you will surely witness the Light."


The King realised his mistake. He saw that *mukti* is not a gift which someone can present to him on a platter. *Mukti* is to be earned. The saints, sages and the scriptures can only show us the path, but it is we who have to walk the path.

No one will give you spirituality, no one can present spiritual strength to you. Your spirituality has to develop from within. You yourself have to grow in spiritual strength in order to attain liberation.

Let me tell you about a *darvesh* (a holy man). He was a poor man, who worked hard during the day to earn his living and studied late into the night. It was his desire to be well educated. He would burn the midnight oil, both literally and metaphorically, for he used to read by the light of an oil lamp. One night, when he sat down to read, he realised that he had run out of oil. He could not get it from anywhere at that late hour. Disappointed, he went to sleep, regretting that the night had been wasted.

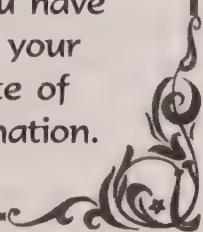
That night he had a dream. In the dream Prophet Mohammed appeared before him and said to him, "Do not be dejected, my child, do not be sad. Just open your mouth and I will pour the wisdom of the world into it. You will be the wisest among men." Do you know what the *darvesh* replied? In the dream he found himself saying, "I do not want you to gift me knowledge. All I want is a little oil for my lamp so that I can study. I do not want knowledge without effort. I want to learn and study and gain knowledge through my own effort."

What a splendid example for us to emulate! Truly has it been said that there can be no true gain without pain. Let us earn our own merit; let us achieve our heart's desires with effort and hard work. What we achieve through our own effort, can never be snatched away from us. Therefore, let us grow in spiritual strength and be blessed.



Take good care of your
body, for it is an
instrument given to
you by God.

But never be attached
to your body. It is only
a garment you have
worn during your
present state of
earth – incarnation.



The Art Of Living

(1)

A friend who came to see me, observed that many men like him aspired to follow the path that led to self-realisation. "But, you know Dada, we are worldly people," he remarked. "We are householders. We have to fulfill our worldly obligations and do our allotted *karma* in our daily life. Please enlighten us as to what we should do to realise God?"

I explained to him that self-realisation was as accessible to the *grihasta* or householder, as it was to a renunciate. In fact, Gurudev Sadhu Vaswani used to say, that there was no need for the householder to renounce the world and seek the *tapoban* – the forest of meditation – in order to find liberation. Rather, the householder should continue to perform his worldly duties to the best of his ability. This planet-earth is a field of action, a *karma bhoomi*. Each one of us must continue to perform our *swadharma*, or duty: in my friend's case, this was obviously to care for his family.



In the Bhagavad Gita, Sri Krishna says, "Life is a field of action, where everyone has to fulfill his duties. One should not shun one's responsibilities." This teaching is not new. All saints and sages in the past have given us the same teaching. This ancient wisdom has been conveyed to us, time and again, by holy men.

Be in the world, but not of the world. Hence cultivate detachment. Attachment to worldly forms or objects distances us from the Reality. He who is detached, is not enamoured by worldly wealth, nor is he a slave to lust. Sure, there are people who may be indifferent to their wealth, family and status, but they are attached to their business, profession, research, art or their institutions. A true pilgrim on the path is one who has no attachment to any kind of worldly affairs. He lives in the world, but is not attached to the world; being detached, he is able to realise God!

Sadhu Vaswani has said, "Every one lives amidst the activities of this world, everyone has to act and do one's duty. We must only act with understanding without getting attached to this world of *maya*. O pilgrim, continue to grow in spiritual strength, in this earthly pilgrimage. Therefore do not get attached to anything or anybody."

We have worn a physical garb to come on this planet earth. We are not the gross physical bodies we wear. The body is only a garment. This body is given us to perform our worldly duties. It is through the physical body that we gather experiences which help

our souls to evolve. In reality, what you regard as your 'self' is not the 'body' – the body is perishable. You are the 'soul', which is imperishable and eternal.

I live in the Life that is undying. Death cannot touch me. Hence, remember, you are a pilgrim on this earth, who has to evolve by performing duties through the physical body.

(2)

Have you ever asked yourself – what is this world? Saints, prophets and sages have expressed different views on the subject.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus descended on this earth and enlightened his disciples:

"This world is a bridge," he said. "Pass over it, but do not build thereon."

March on! You have to cross the bridge. But do not regard this planet earth as your permanent home.

This world is a stage. *Rishis* and saints, in their wisdom, have called this world as an ocean which is dark and turbulent. It engulfs you, pulls you into its turbulence and tosses you around. Maybe, you want to be detached, but the force of worldly desires is such, that you are caught in the vortex of its deep dark waters.

This world is a field of thorns. Let not thorns prick you. Else, you may die of a multitude of wounds.

This world is a wilderness.

There are many, who leave their homes for the sake of serving society. Yet a trifling incident, an unpleasant word or act, topples their balance, and they feel angry and upset. Such people have renounced the world only in name. In reality, they are attached to themselves and the world. They may have renounced the world, but they still cling to their ego.

Recently, I met the President of a prestigious organisation. I told him that one particular gentleman had criticised the working of his organisation. This threw him into a fury and he blurted out: "It is easy to talk but very difficult to do the work."

Yes, it is difficult to renounce power and authority. It is equally difficult to renounce the 'ego'.

In this context Sadhu Vaswani used to say, "Mingle, mingle, do not remain single." In other words, stay in the world and do your duties faithfully, but do not be worldly. This is possible when we are detached.

All attachment arises from a sense of possession: "This is mine. This belongs to me." Believe me, in this world nothing belongs to us. Everything belongs to Him, the Super Master. Once you adopt this attitude – that nothing belongs to me – then being in the world, you are not worldly. For you do not 'possess' anything. A man may renounce the world and live in some cave in the mountains, still if he has not given up the desire to possess, worldly desires will chase him and keep him company even in that remote cave.

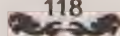


Once, a man seemingly renounced the world. Wearing a loin-cloth and carrying a begging bowl, he was about to go and live in a cave. But even that single loin cloth smacked of worldly attachment, because he considered that loin cloth as his own. It was 'his' possession. This should give us all food for thought. The ascetic insists, "This loin cloth is mine." How much more attached and possessive are people who have much, much more than a loin cloth?

I met a sister, who said to me that she had had enough of worldly life; she now wished to renounce everything and go and serve as a volunteer in an Ashram – preferably in the Himalayas, because she liked the hill stations there. Someone asked her if she would give away her expensive diamond jewellery to her daughter-in-law. The lady was livid with rage: "Where does it say that one has to renounce one's diamonds in order to do social service?" she demanded angrily. "My diamonds are my favourite possessions and they will always be with me."

(3)

It is better to be in the world than to be worldly — attached to things and forms. This is a difficult proposition, but not impossible to achieve, for those who wish to pursue the path of self-realisation. Live in the world, but abide all the time, abide in the mid-point, the neutral point which is within you.



This is the true art of living. If you wish to live an ideal life, then keep your mind fixed on this midpoint. All your worldly desires will vanish. The world cannot touch you. This point is like the peak of Mt. Sumera, a source of enlightenment. Mt. Sumera is where Guru Nanak gave his immortal teachings to the yogis of Gorakhnath. These teachings are enshrined in the sacred *Japji Sahib*.

Just fix your attention on this powerful mid-point. Once you practise this *sadhana*, worldly attachments will fall away, and you will be *in* the world, but not *of* the world. There is no need to go to the mountains or hide in the caves. There is no need to go anywhere, because it is all within you.

Once, a man said to Mahatma Gandhi, "You are a Mahatma. You have nothing to do with worldly affairs. Why don't you go to a *tapoban* and live there? Why are you unnecessarily troubling us, living in this world with your unworldly ideals?"

Mahatma Gandhi smiled and replied, "My dear brother, I carry the peace of the *tapoban* within me. I am all the time in the midst of a *tapoban*. No one can disturb that peace within. No matter how disturbing the external forces are; no matter what criticism or slander is hurled at me, the peace of my *tapoban* remains within me, always."

Let us heed the Mahatma's words: let us be *in* the world, but not *of* the world. We must learn this art of being *in* the world but not *of* the world. Who

will teach us this art? Saints and holy men alone can teach us this art. Even merely listening to their talks can put us on the right path; living by their teachings, can take us far.

Gathering knowledge, a pandit may puff up with pride and ego.

Knowledge gathered from books is ego. Knowledge which comes from within, in periods of silence is wisdom.

He, who meditates on his Guru, touches the mountain peak of love.

A man met me and said, "I have recited the Gita everyday, for full nine years. But it has brought no change in my life and attitude." Merely reading books or reciting the scriptures cannot purify our *antah karana*, the inner instrument. Within each one of us is a light which can only be kindled by another light. Reading books can at best wake up a feeling, an impulse within us to live the true life, but it can take us no further than that. To light the lamp, we need a Guru, a realised soul, who will show us the way.

The other day, a *jignasu* met me and said, "Time and again you advise us to be away from worldly attachment. But when we are in the presence of the Guru, we get attached to him. What do you have to say about this attachment?"

It is true, we get attached to the Guru. But it is also true that as we get closer to the Guru, we get further away from other worldly attachments.



The *jignasu* continued, "Being attached to the Guru, or being attached to the world or ones family are one and the same, is it not? You yourself say that all attachment is *moha*. How then can we justify this attachment to the Guru?"

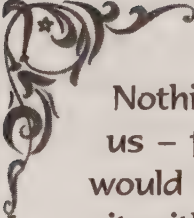
To this my reply was, "True, it is the same attachment. But the Guru is a great artist, a veritable miracle worker who transforms your life and your soul. He knows the art of changing your attitude, of wiping out this attachment. This action of the Guru can be painful for the disciple, but when this 'maze of attachment' is removed, you realise that you have come out of darkness into light."

Lead me out of darkness into Light!

For centuries this has been the deepest cry of some of the choicest souls of India.

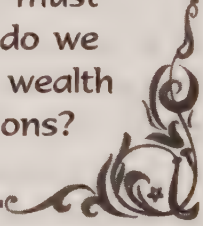
Out of Darkness, O Lord! Lead me into Light!

This is the greatest blessing that the Guru bestows on us. He leads us out of the darkness of *moha* and *maya* into the light of detachment and peace. He releases us from worldly bonds that tie us down, and enables us to reach the Kingdom of Light that is our true Home.



Nothing belongs to
us – for if it did we
would be able to take
it with us! We leave
everything behind.

Everything belongs to
mother earth – back
to the earth it must
go! Why then do we
scramble after wealth
and possessions?



The Story of The Rabbi and His Wife

(1)

This morning as I woke up, I heard a voice whisper:
'This creation belongs to Him.

It is for Him to give, for Him to take.'

All that exists, is God's creation. This whole universe works according to His wish, His will. Whatever He has given us is given as a 'trust'. It is to be used according to His beckoning and His wish. Whatever He has given us is to be spent or used for the common good of all; it is not to be hoarded. He gives; He may take it away any time He wishes to do so.

Suppose a man entrusts you with a precious thing, he can always come and claim it from you. You cannot deny it to him. You will say, "Take back your things and let me be free." But our attitude towards God is different. When God takes away what He has

bestowed on us, we weep and shed tears and we cry ourselves hoarse. Take the example of a child. God blesses you with a child. He has every right to take it back, whenever and however He wishes. The child is mine, you may sob. Yes, the child is yours, so long as it is in your custody! Ultimately, it belongs to the Creator. But we become attached; we develop a possessive attitude to people; we do not want to be parted from those we love; we do not want to return what actually belongs to God and not to us.

There is one thing that keeps us bonded to the world. It is the word 'mine', it is the sense of 'possession'. If we could discard the word 'mine' from our mental frame-work, then we are truly free. Why don't you try it just once? Tell yourself, "Nothing belongs to me. No thing, no one is mine. All the things I have, all the people I know, my family and friends are God's, not my own. Nothing has been given to me absolutely. Everything has been given to me for use." Just keep the word 'mine' out of your life and you will experience the joy of freedom.

There were two sisters who lived in an Ashram. They loved each other very much, and had spent their life together happily, without so much as uttering a harsh word to each other. Their friends would often remark that it was unbelievable, that they had never ever quarrelled, with each other, or even argued over anything, as siblings were apt to do very often.

One day, one sister said to the other, "We have never had a quarrel. We do not know what it is to argue. We have heard that siblings often fight or squabble and quarrel, but we ourselves have not experienced it. Why don't we try to quarrel and see what the experience is like, just once?"

The other sister replied, "Shall I tell you the secret of a quarrel? Shall we try it out? Look at that ball point pen lying in front of us. You must claim it by saying that it belongs to you. I will claim it as my very own pen. Obviously arguments will ensue and there will be some kind of a tug of war – and we will begin to quarrel over this tiny thing called a ball point pen."

The sisters began to claim ownership of the pen, each laying her claim as the first. What began as a make-believe squabble soon blew up into a full-fledged quarrel. The sister, who started the quarrel, exclaimed angrily, "How dare you say the pen is yours? I warn you not to touch it. This pen is mine." The other sister, snatched the pen away, saying, "Shut up! This pen belongs to me. How can you claim it as yours? It has my name on it."

The first one became furious. "You snatched my pen and on top of it, you write your name on it and say it is yours! That is despicable!"

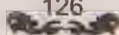
At last, fed up of quarrelling, the second sister said, "I have had enough of this. I don't enjoy this in the least. Let us stop this fight. You can take the pen."

It is yours." The quarrel came to an end, then and there; for all quarrels begin and persist with the thought and feeling that 'this is mine.'

Here is another story of two brothers who loved each other very much. They were so fond of each other that they built identical bungalows side by side. A common wall supported the two houses. By sheer miscalculation, one brother had gained three inches of land more than the other. Three inches of land is a small thing, but it became a bone of contention between the two brothers. The brother who had received three inches of less land, felt betrayed. He felt it was a violation of trust. He filed a legal case against his brother. The civil court took a long time to settle the scores between the brothers. In the meantime, both the brothers were dead. The legal battle continued. Needless to say, it was a futile exercise. For the brothers had died, unhappy and miserable, all due to three inches of land which they could not take with them when they died!

Can we take any tangible wealth with us to the other world? We all know the answer to that question! And yet we struggle to get that disputed settlement, that coveted property, those three inches of land.

I was in Hong Kong, when I saw a strange sight. A dead man's coffin was being carried in a funeral procession, but it was unusual. A large picture of a motor car was stuck on the coffin. On enquiry, I was told that the dead man was very poor. He had a



great desire to own a car. The desire remained unfulfilled. Now that he was dead, a large poster of a motor car was stuck on the coffin. Further, I was told that the poster would be placed by the side of the dead body in the grave. "He could not buy a motor car, at least he can carry the picture of a motor car with him." Don't you feel there is something flawed about this philosophy! Can we carry the picture to the other world? It only remains buried in the grave on this earth, doesn't it? And what if the man had actually realised his ambition in his lifetime and actually managed to buy a car when he was alive? He would still have left it behind, like everything else he owned!

(2)

Once heard a singer of African origin sing this song:

You can't go to heaven in a limousine
For the Lord He has no gasoline!
You can't go to heaven in an aeroplane
For the Lord He lives on a higher plane!

Your gold and silver, your stocks and shares, your real estate, your limousines and Lear jets, everything will have to be left behind here, as you leave this world in the same manner as you came here first – empty handed!

Everything belongs to God. It is up to Him, where to give, to whom to give and how much to give! It is He who gives; it is He who takes away. We are mere trustees of what He gives us. But we cannot claim it as ours. It is His, and it will always remain His.

There was a Rabbi, who used to read the sacred Torah and preach on it. Every day, he would go to the synagogue to preach his religion. The Rabbi had two sons, aged five and seven years. He was extremely fond of his sons and used to refer to them as his two jewels. Every day, as he returned home, after his work was over, the first thing he did was to enquire about his two sons. His sons were handsome and well-behaved. Naturally, their proud father adored them and was deeply attached to them.

One day, disaster struck the pious man's family. The two boys were playing outside their house, when a speeding truck crushed them both to death. One minute, and it was all over! On learning of the accident, the Rabbi's wife went out, picked up her two sons and brought them inside the house. She laid them on the bed, washed their scars and wounds and then covered them with a white sheet. Needless to say, she was a woman of spiritual wisdom and strength.

In the evening, when the Rabbi returned home, he enquired about his two lovely sons. The wife told him to take his meals first and then talk about the children. But the Rabbi was restless. "Where are my jewels?" he asked repeatedly.

“I would first like to seek a clarification from you,” said his wife. “Suppose a man trusts me and leaves his two precious diamonds with me: I love the diamonds, I grow fond of them, I become attached to the two precious diamonds; and then, after a few years, the man who had left the diamonds with me, comes back to reclaim his precious jewels. What should I do? Keep them with me or return the precious gems back to the real owner?”

Hearing this, the Rabbi exclaimed: “How could you, a Rabbi’s wife, ask me such a question? Do I need to tell you what is right? You should know that you should never keep with you, what does not belong to you. You have to be honest and truthful. You are a Rabbi’s wife, you should know that we have no right to retain what does not belong to us. Now tell me, where are my boys?”

“You’re absolutely right, as always,” said the wife, “now, please have your food.”

After the Rabbi finished his dinner, his wife took him to the room, where lay their two sons, covered with a white sheet. Seeing this, the Rabbi was devastated. He stood speechless for a while, and then, he broke down utterly, weeping like a child.

His wife, then said to him, “My dear, just a little while ago, you advised me, to return the precious jewels to the lawful owner – and not to keep them with me. God had entrusted us with these two jewels, one for five years and another for seven years. Today,

he has taken back his jewels. Should we not do the right thing, and return them to Him without complaining?" It was then that the Rabbi realised the Truth of Being.

Everything belongs to God. He gives; He takes away. It is His Will. Lord, Thy will, not mine, be done. God is fair and just. He takes away what belongs to Him. If we understand this Truth, we would be at peace with ourselves.

In life, all that we hanker for is peace. No matter how much wealth we possess, no matter how many cars and bungalows we own, if we do not have peace of mind, all the possessions are worthless.

A devotee of the Lord was strolling on the seashore. A huge wave arose from the ocean and dashed against the shore, leaving behind a fish. The fish lay struggling on the sandy beach. Now, the devotee was an innocent man, not wise in worldly matters. He thought the fish needs air, so he started fanning it. But the fish did not need air. It continued to struggle for survival. The devotee thought, may be the fish needs shade – for the day was quite warm. So he lifted it and placed it in the shade of a tree. Still the fish lay struggling. May be, thought this devotee of the Lord, the fish is uncomfortable on the sand, and so he picked it up and brought it home and placed it on his soft bedding. The struggle continued. It was then that a neighbour suggested that he get a vessel of water and put the fish in it. A



vessel of water was brought and no sooner was the fish put into it, than its struggling stopped. It was at peace. All that the fish wanted was water, its natural habitat, where it could live peacefully.

We have everything, and yet we are restless, struggling to live, because we are away from the Source – the waters of the Spirit. We are cut off from our Native shore; from our Beloved, from our God who is all peace and bliss.


God is Peace.

God is Happiness.

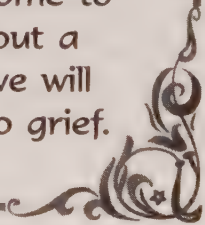
God is Bliss.

When we drink the waters of the Spirit, we are at peace with ourselves. When we imbibe the attitude of emotional detachment, understanding that all that is given to us is a loan – then we enjoy a freedom, which is rare and which brings us joy, harmony and serenity. Like the fish, let us drink the waters of the Spirit. Like the Rabbi's wife, let us imbibe the wisdom that everything we possess and cherish is but a loan, and strike a gold mine of peace and bliss.





On the pathways
of life we face
different types of
weather – stormy and
smooth, wild and mild.
We feel frightened. If
only we cultivate the
faith that such
experiences come to
us not without a
purpose – we will
never come to grief.



The Gateway To The Native Land

(1)

Satsang (fellowship with the pure) is our route to Liberation, the safe passage to our eternal home. *Satsang* is as essential to our spiritual well-being as fitness and nutrition are to our physical health. The sad truth is, that while many people have become conscious of their physical health today, many of us are still indifferent to our spiritual needs, our spiritual welfare and the special 'nourishment' and 'therapy' and 'exercise routine' that the immortal soul within us requires!

People 'in the know' of such things, tell me that fitness equipment like exercycles, treadmills, and rowing machines are now sold directly to fitness conscious individuals for use in their homes; whereas, a couple of decades ago, such machines were only to be found in gyms. Health drinks, low calorie food substitutes and meal replacements have also become extremely popular.

I am glad to know that people are now conscious and aware of the importance of physical fitness. My only desire is that they should become equally sensitive to their spiritual well being! Our *shastras* tell us that the body we inhabit here on our earthly journey, is actually a temple of the Lord: *shariram Brahma mandiram*. Can you see the logic behind keeping the temple in perfect condition, while the deity inside is neglected and uncared for? So let me remind you, this body is a very important and valuable instrument that is indispensable to us on this earthly pilgrimage; but it is an instrument that has been given to us, as an aid to seek Liberation. The body must help us perform those acts of good *karma* that will enable us to realise our true divinity, and thus lead the *Atman* to its true home, the Lotus feet of the Lord.

Even those of us who are not too conscious of fitness and other such 'in' concepts, pay a good deal of attention to looking after the body. Every morning we get up, have a shower and clean ourselves thoroughly, before the daily work routine begins. We take great trouble to invest in clothes, shoes, soaps, shampoos and creams that will help us present a good appearance to the world. How many of us devote time to a spiritual routine everyday?

I am sure you will agree with me when I say: very few of us!

Satsang is nothing but the safest and easiest spiritual routine that we can give ourselves. It cleanses and purifies our hearts. This cleansing of mind and heart



is done through the chanting of the Name Divine, associating with men of God, and also with like minded aspirants who share our quest for Liberation, through *kirtan*, *bhajan* and recitations from the sacred scriptures, as well as listening to discourses that enlighten us. Just as we clean our body with soap and water, similarly we can purify our mind and heart by washing them in the waters of the spirit, the *amrit dhara*, that flows perennially in the *satsang*.

Gurudev Sadhu Vaswani gave us an invaluable message, "Your life on this earth is but a journey, a brief sojourn. Your original home lies beyond this earthly plane; and the passage to the native land is through the *satsang*." The divine presence of a realised soul, a Guru, in itself is a boon, for it brings peace and harmony to your soul, just through the spiritual vibrations that His presence generates. *Satsang* is the flowing water of the spirit. It is the melody of the Name Divine. It cleanses both heart and mind. Therefore, I urge my friends, always join the fellowship of the *satsang* and rejoice in taking dips in the flowing water of the spirit. Do not ever forsake this beautiful, purifying, blissful experience, that is so freely available to all of us. It is as easy as walking in and taking your seat. The power of the *satsang* will take care of the rest.

A sister once came to see me in a very perturbed state of mind. She said that she had been greatly agitated, of late, by a personal crisis that had rocked her life. She needed to talk to me, and was anxious for advice. I suggested that as it was nearly time for

the evening *satsang*, she should attend the same, and then come to talk to me.

She agreed, and went away to join the *satsang*, which was about to begin. As I remember, it was a Tuesday, which, in our Sadhu Vaswani *satsang*, includes a session of meditation. Every evening, when the *satsang* is over, we have a brief session of prayer and silence at Sadhu Vaswani's sacred Samadhi. After this refreshing and uplifting session, I sent for this sister myself, for she had indeed appeared very disturbed.

She came running up to me and said, "Yes, Dada?"

I gently reminded her that she had wanted to meet me urgently, over a matter that had been troubling her.

"Oh, yes, I remember," she said, with a smile. "But Dada, I really feel I don't need to trouble you and trespass on your valuable time now. I have found the answer to my questions, the solution to my problem."

She explained that the moment she walked into the *satsang*, she had felt a sense of peace and calm descending on her. As she heard the *kirtan*, she felt the tears flowing from her eyes, unbidden. The day's *vachan* from the sacred Nuri Granth (the scripture containing Sadhu Vaswani's immortal songs of the spirit), seemed as if it was specially addressed to her. She participated in the *aarti*, which she found to be a healing, purifying experience. In the meditation session which followed, she was actually able to hear her inner voice speak to her, and the terrible weight

of anxiety and worry that had been pressing down on her, lowering her morale and her spirits, seemed to lift like a cloud. At the end of the session, she literally felt that she was a new person, ready to take on the blows and buffers of life. She had not only received inner guidance to approach her own problem, but was also filled with a sense of well being, courage and confidence. In fact, till I sent for her, she had almost forgotten that she had come to me earlier that evening, in a distraught condition, seeking answers to questions that overwhelmed her. Such was the effect of *satsang* on her!

Indeed, I can vouch for the fact that *satsang* is an abundance of positive energy. We must all avail of it.

(2)

Which is our native home? Where is it? Our native home is not like the houses or mansions built upon this earth. For these are made of brick and mortar. These houses, buildings and mansions can crumble down any time, but our native home which is invisible, beyond the manifestation of this world, is in spheres which are yet to be discovered. We have to discover the passage to that invisible sphere which is our native home. Our spiritual life begins with this thought. It is futile to be possessive of our material homes which are destructible and can fall to the ground any time. Our true home, our

native home is imperishable, is indestructible. It is the home from where we all have come and where we all shall return.

O man, wake up! Understand that you are only a guest for a while on this earth. You have to move out of this bazaar, if not today, then tomorrow or the day after.

Says Sant Kabir in one of his *dohas*, "Why do you cry over death which leads you to your native home? Cry rather, over your fruitless wandering, your chasing after the trivial things of this earth."

The question is how may we recognise, remind ourselves of our Divine origins? How to know, from where have we come? How to find the address, and our way back to our eternal home?

The Master often asked us to sit in silence and to ask ourselves the question, "From where do I come?"

We all know that our stay on this earth is temporary. It may be few years or it may be sixty, seventy or may be even more years. But before coming here, where were you? Try and answer this question. Discover for yourself, where is your true home? Unless and until you find an answer to this question, you will continue to wander in this bazaar of worldly *maya*.

This wandering is futile, for we have to return to our native land. And the sooner we realise this, the better it is. *Satsang* is the easy passage to that true abode. Hence, *satsang* is very important for each and every one of us.



All the religions of the world, in some way or the other, refer to the native land. Two thousand years ago, Sri Isha (Jesus), came to this earth to awaken the slumbering men. "Awake, stand up and let's move on to the Kingdom of God," he said. Those who yearn to see the Beauteous face of the Lord, should know that the gate which opens to the kingdom of God is small, narrow and straight.

Says Sant Kabir, "Find a man of God who can open the door so that you can pass through easily."

I have often reflected on these words. Jesus says too, that the door to the ultimate freedom (*mukti*) is very, very small. It is as small as the eye of a needle. To enter you have to be as small as a point. The *satsang* and the *satpurkha* who conducts the *satsang*, will teach us to pass through it easily. That is why we should build a strong and timeless bond with *satsang*.

In the *satsang*, we get associated with a man of God and He blesses us with spiritual treasures. Truly speaking, triple is the treasure that one receives from a man of God. However, in order to be worthy recipients of this treasure, we should go to the *satsang* with an emotional yearning and a thirst for spiritual knowledge. The yearning should be deep, as deep as when floundering in the darkness, one yearns for a ray of light. Go to *satsang* with devotion, with love, with yearning and you will receive the triple treasure of spirituality.

What are these three treasures that we receive from the *satsang*?

The first treasure is that we learn meditation. Sitting at the lotus feet of a holy one, we learn to meditate. Meditation stills our restless mind. The treasure of meditation is found only by those *satsangis* who go there with true devotion. It is said, "Through concentration, you will experience bliss." First we learn concentration. And then we move to meditation, which takes us to the higher regions of Awareness and Bliss!

The second treasure which we receive is *Naam Kirtan*, that is, chanting the Name Divine. By chanting the Name Divine, by immersing ourselves into the holy waters of the spirit, we are relieved of many tensions. By chanting the Name Divine, our *antah-karana* – inner instrument gets purified; it draws our senses to a focus, and we feel refreshed.

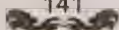
The third treasure which we receive from *satsang* is prayer. What is prayer? Prayer is contact with the Unseen. It is the link to the Universal Self. Prayer helps us to build a relationship with the Invisible. Prayer is a rare treasure; and he who knows to pray is truly blessed.

To illustrate the meaning of prayer, Sadhu Vaswani once narrated to us, an incident of a small child. On a dark night, the child wanted to go up to his room, but he was afraid of climbing the stairs in

total darkness. The child got scared and he called out, "Ma, Ma, where are you? Please hold my finger, for this darkness is too deep for me. If you hold my finger the fear of darkness will disappear."

Just as man floundering in darkness yearns for light, just like a child who wants to hold the finger of his mother to lead him forward safely, so too, we all need the comfort of spiritual light, and that is prayer. Prayer is an illumination. Prayer is a flame of light. Prayer helps us to bond with the Infinite. Prayer is the key to the true life. Those on the spiritual path do different kinds of *sadhana*, but every *sadhana* has its limitations. Meditation has its limitations; you cannot meditate all the time; likewise concentration has its limitations. *Naam kirtan* too has its limitations. After all, how long can you chant? All these are limited means. But prayer has no limit; it is limitless. You can pray all the time, throughout your life. Prayer can be continuous and endless. Prayer has no boundary of Time and Space.

The question then is: how can we make our lives one continuous, unceasing prayer? Saints, holy men, men of God bring with themselves an invaluable treasure, which they want to distribute. They search for the disciples to whom they can bequeath this treasure. But there are few takers. For not everyone in the *satsang* is ready to take this invaluable treasure of spiritual life. Hence, if you go to the *satsang*, go with a thirst, with a yearning; only then can you be the beneficiary of this triple treasure, the treasure of

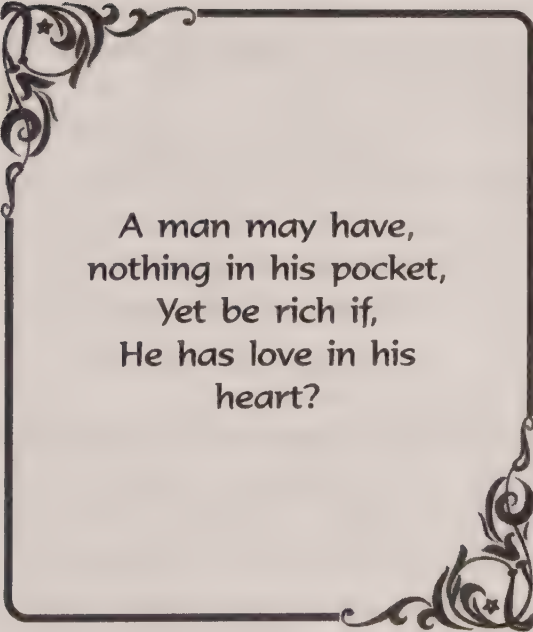


meditation, the treasure of *Naam kirtan* and the treasure of prayer.

A man of prayer is ever content. He accepts the will of God. A man of prayer is ever fearless, for he is a man of faith. A man of prayer is not afraid of even death. I may narrate to you an incident from the life of the great French writer and thinker, Voltaire. He had achieved eminence and fame in his own lifetime as a great scholar and a writer. He had authored many books and lectured at well known universities and colleges. Lying on his death bed, this great man suddenly feels afraid of death. He becomes nervous and tears roll down his cheeks. In the adjacent room lay a child, just twelve years old, suffering from TB. Doctors had warned her that the last moment may occur at any time. Yet she was calm, smiling and cheerful. "Why be afraid of death? Death is a bridge to the other world where I shall meet my Beloved, my Lord," she said. Everyone around her was surprised and wanted to know the secret of her positive attitude. The secret was just this: She was a child of prayer, who prayed to the Lord every day. Her whole life was built on the faith that God was by her side and death would lead her to God. "Nearer my God to Thee, Nearer to Thee."

May the holy men and women of God shower their benedictions on us. May we build our lives in prayer and faith. May we learn to open the door that shows us the passage to our native land. May we move out of darkness into that wonderful sphere of light!





A man may have,
nothing in his pocket,
Yet be rich if,
He has love in his
heart?

The Miracle Of Love

(1)

Not unoften, have I heard the words: They keep ringing in my ears:

*“Learn just one word,
Forget all else,
Let your heart be pure,
All else you have learnt
Matters little!”*

We spend so much time reading books of all kinds: books of our special interest, books to update our professional knowledge, books for entertainment, and so on. But books have their limitations. I say this advisedly, for I too am a book lover! Still, I do not hesitate to tell you, that book-learning is at best limited learning. True, we acquire knowledge from books. But it is abstract knowledge arising from dry words. We acquire knowledge. But all knowledge is not wisdom. And, the reading of books does not



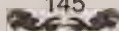
always cleanse the heart and the mind. The volumes of words we read ultimately becomes a burden which we are unable to carry.

In one of our ancient scriptures, a comparison is drawn between a man who is a great scholar and a donkey bearing a load of sandalwood!

A scholar may have read hundreds of books, he may have gathered extensive knowledge, but if this knowledge cannot be transformed into wisdom and translated into deeds of daily living, then he is little better than a donkey carrying a bag of 'sandal wood' on his back, unaware of its fragrance and value.

There are scholars who are continuously engaged in the pursuit of knowledge. But, alas, their learning only makes them proud and egoistic! This is not true learning. *Vidya dadhati vinayam*: true knowledge teaches us humility.

We have to purify our hearts, our inner instruments. Only then may we find the grace to witness the Light. This illumination of the soul is true wisdom. Reading scriptures, or reciting them before others, is neither wisdom nor true knowledge. Memorising verses from the Gita, *Gurbani* or *Santbani* and discussing it with others is not spiritual wisdom. It is merely an intellectual activity. What matters is that we imbibe the spirit of the scriptures and make an effort to bear witness to what we have learnt in deeds of daily living. We see the Light, we are illumined only when we put into practice all that we have learnt from the sacred scriptures. This way we



purify ourselves. The illumination we seek, the wisdom that is beyond books, this vision of Light then comes to us naturally. It is an automatic process.

If wisdom could be acquired through books, our professors and teachers will be the most enlightened souls amongst us. But, illumination or enlightenment does not come from the dry words of books.

History tells us of many enlightened souls who were totally illiterate. They could not even write their own name! Take the example of Sant Kabir. He was a weaver, who worked on a loom, but he was an illumined soul! He was illiterate, but he was enlightened. He dwelt in the Light and the Light dwelt within Him.

Sri Ramkrishna Parmahansa was illiterate. But he was a great saint. He was an evolved soul. Even University Professors thronged to hear his discourses. They recognised that his intuitive wisdom was above their book learning.

Wisdom is not of the books. Wisdom is Light. It is illumination. Unless we have had a glimpse of the inextinguishable Light that is within each one of us, we do not become men and women of wisdom, even though we may have read a whole library of books. To get that 'vision' of illuminating Light, there are other ways which we can follow. We must cultivate sympathy. We must go to the *satsang*, enjoy the company of holy ones. We must serve mankind without any expectation or thought of return. We must protect the birds and animals, we must protect



the weak against exploitation. Better than all this is to create an urge, a thirst and a longing for that Light. This longing should be deep and intense, like that of the Gopis for Krishna. If we can evoke such deep yearning for the Lord, then purification will be easy and our goal will be within reach.

Do you know how our mothers used to wash heavily soiled clothes? They would soak the clothes in water first, to get rid of all the surface dirt. They would then wash the same in detergent, putting it through a second and third wash to remove the stubborn stains. Today, we have high tech washing machines which have special programmes for heavily soiled clothes. Even then there are some clothes which cannot be washed to our satisfaction. Some stains remain, and you decide to send the clothes for dry cleaning.

Imagine our condition! We have accumulated the dirt and evil muck of many previous births. It is not easy to wash them away. There are no washing machines that can cleanse our interiors. Yearning for the Lord can accomplish this task. Call it thirst, call it longing. Translate it into love, *bhakti*. It means the same. *Bhakti* is important. Without *bhakti*, it becomes increasingly difficult to reach the Goal.

(2)

There is an interesting story that I would like to share with you in this regard. Sheikh Farid once

visited a city, where his discourses and teachings captivated the hearts of all seekers. Many people flocked to see him, hear him and get his blessings. Among them was a young man, who fell at the Saint's feet and said, "Please help me see the Face of the Beloved! Please help me commune with Allah, for my heart is smitten with longing for the Lord!"

Sheikh Farid smiled at the young man and asked him, "Have you ever fallen in love? Do you have an experience of *ishq*?"

"Alas, no," the young man replied, "till now I have never experienced that strange emotion."

"In that case," Farid said, "I suggest that you fall in love! Fall in love with someone, learn the ways of love and then come back to me. I will show you how you may realise God."

So determined was the young man to realise God, that he set about following the Saint's command. He walked the streets of the city, but he saw no one with whom he could fall in love. As he wandered through the city, he happened to cross the Palace gates. Glancing at the upper storey, he saw a beautiful girl standing near a window. "Here is the girl I was looking for," he said to himself. "I shall fall in love with her. I shall gain the experience of love."

Straightaway he positioned himself outside the palace in such a way that he could look at the window directly. And he stood there, trying to catch a glimpse of the girl.



Now, the girl happened to be the princess of the realm, the only daughter of the king. She saw the young man standing beneath her window staring at her, whenever she happened to pass. At first, she dismissed him as a curious passer-by; but when he continued to stand there, day after day, she became annoyed. She sent her maids to chase him away.

The palace maids approached the young man and said to him, "Leave this spot at once, or you will be in trouble! The princess is upset by your constant presence. We were sent to drive you away. If you do not leave, she may complain to the King, and you will be sent to prison or thrown out of the kingdom!"

The young man was unabashed. "A holy man has sent me here to learn the experience of love," he said to the women. "I am determined to learn the lesson thoroughly. Come what may, I shall remain here, looking at the girl I love."

When the princess was told of this, she was taken aback. What kind of madness was this? How could one deal with a man who was set on such a foolhardy mission?

Before she could decide on how best to deal with this 'lover', news reached the king's ears that a young man was standing outside the palace, staring at the princess's window. The King's blood began to boil! Why, the scoundrel must be shot dead! He summoned his minister and ordered him to put the man to death.

By now, the minister had been apprised of the whole story. Earnestly, he said to the King, "Let us not act in haste, your Majesty. The young man has spoken of true Love. A Lover has to be treated with caution. His sighs, his tears and his anguish have the power to move heaven. Many empires have been destroyed because of the pain of Lovers. If the young man curses us, God will hear the curse, and send disasters upon us!"

The King was alarmed. "You may be right," he said, "but I urge you to do something – anything – to drive the man away from there. The sight of him standing there with that intense look, unnerves me! I do not want those eyes to behold my daughter. Please do something to spare us from those eyes."

The Minister thought carefully, and worked out a strategy. He went to meet the young man and said to him: "I understand your wish. You are determined to go through the experience of Love. I will tell you how your desire may be accomplished, come with me."

The Minister took the young man to the entrance of the watch-tower just inside the Palace gates. "Climb this tower," he said to the young man. "When you reach the top, you will see the princess standing below. If you truly wish to attain your beloved, jump down from the top of the tower, and she will be yours."

The young man accepted the Minister's challenge. In a matter of minutes, he had climbed the steep steps of the tower and reached the top.

The Minister now persuaded the King and the princess to walk down to the tower. He explained to the King, "This youth is either a mad man, or a true Lover. I am now going to ask him to jump down. If he is smashed to smithereens, our problem is solved. If he survives, then he is a True Lover, and we should deal with him carefully."

And so it came to pass. The princess stood below, and the Minister cried to the young man, "If you truly love her, jump down now! But consider carefully, whether you really want to do this. Think of the risk, the danger involved. Retract, before it is too late."

The young man replied, "This tower is nothing! I would jump into an ocean, walk into a fire, and fall from a cliff for the sake of my beloved!" He looked at the princess, who appeared to be a tiny speck below him. Calling the name of God, he jumped down!

There was a furore! The young man lay, lifeless, at the feet of the stunned princess. She began to weep bitterly. The King and the Minister were too shocked to react.

At that very moment, Farid reached the palace. At a glance, he took in what had happened. Taking stock of the situation, he said to the princess, "Go near the lifeless form of this young man and call out his name – Salim. If he is a True Lover, he will open his eyes at your voice."

The princess did as she was told. She drew close to the young man and whispered, "Salim! Salim!"

A miracle came to pass! The young man not only awakened, he was up on his feet when he saw Farid.

Farid then said to him, "Behold, young man, the princess is here by your side. You are free to marry her and become the Lord of this vast kingdom."

"But what will I do with this kingdom?" cried the young man. "You know I came here to prove myself. My one and only desire is to see the face of Allah. All the rest is of no interest to me!"

"Look at the princess," said Farid softly. "Is she not beautiful? Would you not be a lucky man to marry such a girl?"

The young man stared at the princess. "True, she is very beautiful," he agreed. "But her beauty is not without blemish, and, as for me, my heart is set on meeting Allah."

Pleased at the answer, Farid beckoned the young man to follow him. "Come with me and I shall get you a glimpse of True beauty, beauty which is pure and blemish free..."

(3)

What one needs is devotion, a thirst, a yearning, a passion for the Lord. If you want to see the splendor of that true Beauty which is beyond compare,

you have to cultivate an intense feeling of love and a deep devotion for the Lord!

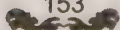
Blessed is he, who is privileged to see the Eternal Home. Fortunate is he, who sees the illuminating Light. At first, he gets a glimpse of it within himself. Then enlightened, he sees the light outside of him, around him. He perceives it everywhere.


*Jidar dekta hoon,
Udhar tu hi tu hai...*

Wherever I look, I see Him and Him alone! Every object radiates His light!

To him the universe is God-filled. Every atom in the universe is radiant with His presence!

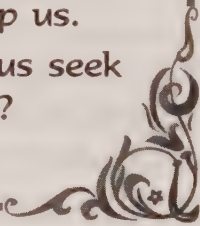
His identification with others is perfect. He sees himself in others. He feels their sorrow and suffering as his own. He suffers with them, he rejoices with them. Such a person sees the same 'life' in everything in nature; animals, birds, insects and plants and trees. To him birds and animals are an image of God. He feels the same life flowing in every object – in sentient and in non-sentient things. Such awareness is true knowledge. It is true wisdom. With this awareness comes the yearning to see, to meet, to merge with that light.





God is our
Friend — the Friend of
all friends — the one
constant, unchanging
Friend. He is available
to us all the twenty-
four hours of the day
and night. He is ever
ready to help us.

How many of us seek
His help?



The Man Who Made Friends With God

(1)

Whenever the opportunity arises, I look forward to meeting children and interacting with them. On such occasions, I often ask them the question, "What would you like to become?" The answers mostly pertain to their chosen future careers. One answer is invariably, "I want to become Hrithik Roshan." Another would say, "I want to be a great doctor." And the third one would dream of becoming an aeronautical engineer.

Once, a little boy answered, "I want to be a friend of God!" How thrilled I was to hear such an aspiration from the lips of the little one! Imagine, this small child wanted to be a friend of God!

Sadhu Vaswani has written a book, titled, 'Friends of God'.

May I ask you, how many of you would like to be friends with God?

To be a friend of God, perhaps you may have to face many storms, many difficulties, many dangers, many challenges. But, believe me, your aspiration is well worth all the trouble you take! Being friends with God adds an altogether new dimension to life. Nothing is impossible to those who are friends with God, nothing is difficult for them. They will gladly take the cross, and bear its burden.

As for most of us, we have made friends with the world. We cannot dilute the kind of friendship that I am talking about, any more than we can serve two masters, God and mammon – for such friendship is meant to be with the One and only One without a second – and that is with God.

Perhaps the little boy was innocent. He was ignorant of this relationship which is unique, far beyond worldly dimensions. So I asked the little boy, “Would you like to make friends with Sri Krishna or with the world?” The boy was puzzled. He asked, “If I am friends with God, will He give me all the goodies? Will He give me money?”

“May be,” I replied, “He may make you rich or He may make you a *fakir*. It all depends upon His wish.” Thereupon, the boy withdrew his intention of being friends with God. Instead, he said, “I think I would rather be friends with the world.”

Nowadays, people want both – friendship with God and friendship with the world. But Jesus Christ made it very clear that this was not possible. He said

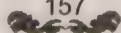


to his disciples, "If you serve two masters, a time will come, when one master will tell you to do one thing, the other will tell you to do something different." What will you do then? It is a difficult decision.

(2)

I am reminded of a *fakir*, whose name was Allah Yaar. This pertains to the time when Shah Jahan was the Emperor of India. He had then commenced the work of construction of the Taj Mahal. He had ordered his treasury, to spend as much as they could, to ensure that the Taj Mahal would be a great monument, a wonderful gift to his beloved wife, Mumtaz. A time came when his treasury coffers were nearly empty. When informed about the sad condition of his empty coffers, the Emperor fell into despair. He had never imagined that his wealth would diminish so soon! Seeing the plight of the Emperor, his Begum Mumtaz said to him, "*Jahan Panah!* For four days you have been gloomy and depressed; I have seen that you have lost your appetite, and even forgotten to smile! What is the matter?"

The Emperor shared his anxiety with his beloved wife. It was then that the queen told the King about a *fakir*, who had visited the palace sometime ago. "The *fakir* had a sweet melodious voice. He was also very humble. I gave the *fakir* a gold coin," she said. "The *fakir* looked at the coin, turned to me and said, "We can make gold out of dust. But unfortunately, we cannot



make chapattis out of gold. If you wish to give me something, then please give me something to eat. What will I do with this gold coin?" My Lord, if you can only arrange to meet this *fakir*, your monetary problems would be solved. This *fakir* comes to the palace for alms every few months. His name is Allah Yaar!"

The Emperor decided to meet the *fakir* and gave instructions to his servants, that whenever Allah Yaar visited the palace, he should be detained and the Emperor should be informed of his arrival.

After a few months, this very same *fakir* came to the palace seeking alms. The Emperor summoned him and asked him, "Please tell me, do you really make gold out of dust?"

Hearing this, the *fakir* laughed out aloud. "If I could make gold out of dust, then why would I beg alms, your Majesty?" he said to the Emperor.

The Emperor was angry. "If you do not tell me the secret, I shall put you behind bars!" he threatened.

"That really doesn't bother me," replied the *fakir* nonchalantly. "In jail, all my difficulties will be over. I will not have to roam from place to place in search of daily bread. Sitting inside the prison, I shall get my two meals a day, served to me in my own cell."

The Emperor ordered the *fakir* to be put behind bars and put to the most rigorous labour of breaking stones. For three days, the *fakir* suffered this punishment. On the fourth day, the Emperor himself went to meet the *fakir*, thinking that by now, he



would surely be ready to divulge the secret of turning dust into gold.

“If I knew the art of turning dust into gold, then why would I remain in jail and bear this punishment of breaking stones?” retorted the *fakir*.

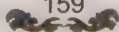
Not satisfied by the answer, the Emperor ordered the jailor to mete out still more severe punishment to the *fakir*. “Make him draw water and fetch it to all the cells; make him do work which will exhaust him.”

After a few days, the Emperor again went to the jail and met this *fakir*. “Now, you must tell me this trick of turning mud into gold,” he said imperiously, “and I shall pardon you and set you free.”

The *fakir* said, “My Lord, if I knew the trick, why would I be in jail, why would I grind grains, fetch water, break stones and ruin myself?”

Six months passed. Allah Yaar thought to himself, “One should earn one’s living. One should not be a burden on any one. One should work hard, to get a meal for sustenance. So what if I am inside the jail? I am slogging, it is true, but let that be my payment for the meals I get here in the jail.” Another six months passed by. The Emperor again posed the same question to the *fakir*, who in turn gave him the same answer as on earlier occasions!

That night, the Emperor confronted his queen Mumtaz Mahal. “The *fakir* you spoke of refuses to divulge his secret.”



"Did you persuade him? Did you try your best to turn him around?"

"I did my best. I put him behind the bars. I made him grind the grains. I coaxed him, cajoled him, forced him to tell me the secret, but to no avail. The *fakir* would not budge an inch. He remained firm and refused to reveal the secret."

Hearing this, the queen smiled. "You should have been more humble with him. You should have served him, and pleaded with him in all humility. If the *fakir* is pleased, he will willingly divulge the secret of his own accord." The Emperor took some time to digest this kind of appeal.

Next day, the Emperor, wearing the garb of a poor peasant, took some millet bread and curds to the *fakir*.

"It is unfortunate that a *fakir* like you is imprisoned. I took permission of the jailor to present myself to you and be of service to you," said the disguised Emperor. "I can press your arms and legs, and relieve you of pain." In this way the Emperor served the *fakir* for a whole week.

After a week, the *fakir* asked the Emperor, "What do you do for your living?"

"I leave the house in the morning and go begging throughout the day. In the evening, I collect enough to provide food to my two children and wife. Nowadays, I go back home in the afternoon, and make millet 'rotis' for you. I manage to get a little milk, to make curds for you!"



Apparently, the *fakir* seemed pleased. "From tomorrow onwards, your financial difficulties will be over. Bring a paper and a pencil, when you come tomorrow. I will teach you how to make gold out of dust."

Next day, the Emperor brought a paper and a pencil. The *fakir* wrote out the name of a rare herbal shrub, and dictated the process of making gold. "Take a clay pot. Put a few copper coins in it. Take a sprig of the herb I mentioned. Put it into the pot. Cover it with a clay plate. Seal it from all sides with a little flour paste. Bury it in the ground. Burn dung cakes over it. Leave it overnight. Next morning, you will see that the copper coins have turned into gold coins."

The Emperor replied, "Why should I take so much trouble? I am a poor man. I am used to begging. I beg throughout the day, and return in the night, contented. All this trouble...not for me...no."

Allah Yaar said, "Please don't refuse my offer. This secret is divulged only to you! Make use of it."

But the Emperor feigned no interest in this 'gold magic'.

Next day, the Emperor took millet 'roti' and curds to the *fakir* as usual. The *fakir* asked, "Did you try out the secret recipe of making gold?"

"Till now, I haven't attempted it," replied the Emperor. "Do try it, my friend," urged the *fakir*, "you will become wealthy, and with this newly acquired wealth, you can help so many *fakirs* and *darveshes*."



You will have the opportunity to do acts of charity, instead of depending on others for their charity to you."

On the third day, the Emperor appeared before the *fakir*, in his royal robes and said, "At least now, you must tell me, how to make dust into gold."

The *fakir* replied, "If I knew how to make gold out of dust, then why would I be a beggar?"

In reply, the Emperor said, "If you will not give away your secret, then I will send you to the gallows!"

The Emperor ordered death penalty for the *fakir*. He was brought to the gallows.

"Now give up your stubbornness. Tell me, how to make gold out of dust," the Emperor ordered him, for the last time.

Hearing this, the *fakir* smiled again. "I have been waiting for this great moment," he said, "when I shall kiss death and meet my Beloved."

The Emperor took out the piece of paper, and said, "Who has written this?"

"It is written for a man who was humble and poor; who had humility in his heart, and who served a *fakir*."

Allah Yaar then realised that it was actually the Emperor who had been visiting him in the garb of a beggar. But he did not reveal it. He blessed the Emperor and moved on. He refused to disclose his secret even when he was sentenced to be put on the gallows.

He alone can make friends with God, who has yearning in his heart. I am sure, that with faith, with patience and longing in the heart, a person can become a friend of God.

There was a rich man. He lived a life of luxury. Never, ever did he thirst for the Lord! But then, one day, the tables turned on him. One single incident shattered his life. The blow was so severe, that he had to find comfort in *Naam simran*. He started going to the *satsang* everyday. Gradually, his 'inner self' became purified. It is true, that as we hear the recitation of sacred verses from the scriptures, or read spiritual literature, our *antah karana* or inner instrument is purified.

The problem of spiritual life is the problem of inner purification. It is necessary to cleanse our hearts, purify ourselves from within; purification makes us sweet, soft, gentle and humble. Something like this happened to this man. After the *satsang* he met a saint. The meeting had a catalytic effect on him. He wept tears, and asked, "The yearning to meet the Lord, is increasing day by day. I want to meet my Beloved." He further pleaded, "You must be in communion with the Lord, everyday. Kindly request Him to shower His grace on me!"

The saint seemed pleased. "Good," he said, "today itself, I shall give your message to God."

On the following day, after the *satsang*, the wealthy man asked the saint, "Did you take my message to the Lord?"

The saint replied, "Yes, I did take the message to the Lord, but He did not accept it. He said, "Go and tell this gentleman, that if one wishes to reach the Almighty, one has to go through a test. It is not so easy. You have to pass the stern test, before you qualify to meet the Lord! To be a friend of God, is very, very difficult. Take your time to decide. There is no hurry."

A few days passed by. This wealthy man would tell the saint everyday, "O Swamiji! I am ready."

On the third day, when the wealthy man appeared with the same statement, the saint said, "I will surely place your request before the Lord."

On the fourth day, this wealthy man was full of excitement, wondering whether God had complied with his request. The saint warned him again. "This path is difficult. Think before you take this leap. You should not repent later on. Making friendship with God is tough and trying. Are you ready for the ordeal?"

The wealthy man insisted that he would be true to his friendship with God.

The saint merely told him, "Look here. I am only a messenger. I will carry your message to the Lord."

On this day, the Lord replied, "If he is ready, I am ready too."

My dear friends, faith and patience are prerequisites for the spiritual path. Without these two qualities this path cannot be traversed. To understand God, is to accept His will. Yes, Father yes, and always yes. You should have the faith that whatever happens, happens for the best. "God, Thou knowest all! Thy Will be done!" This kind of faith and acceptance are necessary for spiritual life.

The wealthy man thus forged his friendship with the Lord. Just after three days he received a telegram that his property abroad had been destroyed by an earthquake. He had been forewarned; yet he felt devastated. Next day, he learnt that his business had plunged into losses. "I should have waited a few days, before committing myself to our friendship with the Lord!" he mused. "Now that I am committed, I cannot break the friendship."

In less than a few days, he felt miserable! Unable to bear all the traumatic happenings, he approached the Swamiji with the words – "Swamiji, I am not able to bear the suffering. I no longer want this friendship with God. I am sorry, please pardon me."

Swamiji smiled and said, "I shall pass on your message to God."

The reply from God was, "This friendship cannot be broken. It was one of the preliminary conditions of our commitment. He cannot go back. There is no reversal on this path!"

Swamiji gave the message to the wealthy man. The man said desperately, "Please request God to free



me from this commitment. He may put any penalty He wants on me."

Swamiji again passed on the message to the Lord. In the evening, the wealthy man went back to him and asked for God's reply.

God's reply was, "Friendship should be free and unforced. It is not desirable to keep this man in bondage of our friendship. Let him be free. But there is a condition he must fulfill, in order to be free from my friendship; please tell him, there is a devotee of the Lord who lives on the outskirts of this town. He should go to meet her. He should take with him, a bullock cart loaded with wheat, rice, vegetables, oil and lentils. The moment the devotee accepts his cart load of goods, I will release him from the bondage of our friendship."

The wealthy man was highly pleased. What an easy way to end this relationship, he thought. Just a cart load of goods to be delivered to a particular devotee of the Lord! Immediately, he went to a grocery shop and bought a cart load of grains and oil. He took it all straightaway to the address he had been given.

He knocked on the door. A young girl opened the door. "Does so and so stay here?" asked the devotee. The girl replied in the affirmative. "I have been asked by the Divine Powers, to deliver this cartload of goods to her," said the man to her.

The girl replied, "My grandmother is in deep meditation. She cannot be disturbed now."

The man said, "It does not matter. Let her not be disturbed, but you must kindly accept this gift of grains, vegetable and oil."

The girl replied, "Sorry. I cannot accept your offerings. I do not have the permission to accept such gifts."

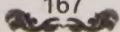
The man had to wait. He was determined to do the task assigned to him then and there, and not put it off for the morrow. God alone knew what kind of catastrophe would befall him next! He waited for an hour which stretched to three hours. At last, the old woman opened her eyes. The young grand daughter brought her to this wealthy man, waiting with the gifts.

"I have been asked by the Divine Powers to deliver this cart load of grains, vegetables, oils and other groceries to you. Kindly accept it."

The old lady asked the young girl to go inside and find out whether there was enough flour, lentils and other grains. The girl rushed inside and came out with the reply, "Grandmother, we have enough to see us through tomorrow."

The old lady said to this wealthy man, "I am sorry! I really need nothing now. I have enough food for tomorrow. I do not worry for the day after."

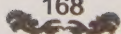
The remark astounded the wealthy man. He thought to himself, "True, I have lost crores of rupees, but still I have enough wealth to see me through my life. This poor old lady has nothing; only just enough



grains to cook for the next day, and yet she has refused the offer of this cart load of food!" Suddenly realisation dawned on him. He went rushing back to the saint. "Swamiji," he implored, "Kindly convey my message to the Lord, immediately. Tell him our bond is secure. It can not be revoked!"

He, who bonds with the Lord, bonds forever!

The Lord is our refuge at all times, in all climes. To seek refuge in the Lord is to trust Him – fully, completely, entirely. It is to know that He is the One Light that shines and shines and ever shines upon us. Though the storms and vicissitudes of life threaten to uproot us, though the darkness around grows deeper, His Light will continue to shine. He is the Creator, He is the Sustainer of all that is, He is the Deliverer from whom all evils flee. And He is not from us afar.



India's saints and sages, from Maharishi Narad to Swami Sivananda, from Sage Vasishtha to Sadhu Vaswani, have all emphasized the value of daily *satsang* as an indispensable aid to spiritual growth. Unfortunately, many of us in the modern age have one common excuse to cite as our inability to attend *satsang*: lack of time!

If this is your excuse too, we offer you a remedy through this book which is now in your hands; it is the closest you can get to a *satsang* in print, for it is a compilation of Rev. Dada J.P. Vaswani's *upadeshes*, originally delivered in Sindhi or Hindi. These have now been translated into English for your benefit, retaining the spirit of the original discourses and keeping intact, Rev. Dada's inimitable personal touches and nuances of thought.

God's presence is felt in the *satsang*, where disciples come to sit at the feet of their Guru, to imbibe his wisdom and grace. Indeed, God speaks to us through the Guru, piercing the veil of *maya* which hides Him from our earthly vision. The Guru's discourses in the *satsang* are seldom pre-planned or prepared in advance; they are inspired by the sanctity and the pure vibrations emanating from the *satsang* and the pure vibrations of Divine Power. Each discourse is thus a rare and unique pearl of piety and wisdom, imbued with Divine grace. The theme, the scriptural references, the values they depict – all flows spontaneously from the Guru's lips; as listeners, we are only aware, that this is a river of nectar flowing before us and nothing can prevent us from drinking deeply from this immortal fountain of wisdom.

Come, the *amrit dhara* is captured in print for you; partake of the divine feast to your heart's content. In Sadhu Vaswani's immortal words, "Sukh sagar mein aaye ke math jao re pyasa pyare!" *Do not go away thirsty and parched from the ocean of bliss!*



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